the weekly Standard

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REMEMBERING ARNOLD BEICHMAN
CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

HAITI BURIES ITS DEAD

BY MATT LABASH

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Myths About Israel and the Middle East (2)

Should we re-examine endlessly repeated clichés?

In a previous installment in this series of clarifying messages about Israel and the Middle East, we examined certain myths which, by dint of constant repetition, had acquired currency and acceptance. We looked at the myth of "Palestinian nationhood," the myth of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") being "occupied territory," the myth that Jewish settlements in these territories are "the greatest obstacle to peace," and the myth that Israel is unwilling to "yield land for peace." And we cleared up the greatest myth of all, namely that Israel's administration of the territories, and not the unrelenting hatred of the Arabs against the Jews, is the root cause of the conflict between the Arabs and Israel. But those are not all the myths; there are more.

What are more of these myths?

■ **Myth:** The Arabs of Israel are a persecuted minority.

Reality: The over one million non-Jews (mostly Arabs) who are citizens of Israel have the same civil rights that Jews have. They vote, are members of the Knesset (parliament), and are part of Israel's civil and diplomatic service, just as their Jewish fellow citizens. Arabs have complete religious freedom and full access to the Israeli legal, health and educational systems – including Arabic and Muslim universities. The only difference between the "rights" of Arabs and Jews is that Jewish young men must serve three years in the military and at least one month a year until age 50. Young Jewish women serve for two years. The Arabs have no such civic obligation. For them, military service is voluntary. Not too surprisingly, except for the Druze, very few avail themselves of the privilege.

> "It is in our national interest that reality, not myths, govern our policy."

■ **Myth:** Having (ill-advisedly) already given up control of the Gaza Strip, Israel should also give up the administration of Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") because strategic depth is meaningless in this age of missiles.

Reality: Israel is a mini-state – about half the size of San Bernardino county in California. If another, even smaller mini-state were carved out of it, Israel would be totally indefensible. That is the professional opinion of 100 retired U.S. generals and admirals. If the Arabs were to occupy whatever little strategic depth Israel has between the Jordan River and its populated coast, they would not need any missiles. Artillery and mortars would suffice, since Israel would be only nine miles wide at its waist. Those who urge such a course either do not understand the situation or have a death wish for Israel.

■ **Myth:** If Israel would allow a Palestinian state to arise in Judea and Samaria it would be a democratic state and would be totally demilitarized.

Reality: There is no prospect at all that anything resembling a democratic state could be created in the territories. There is not a single democratic Arab state – all of them are tyrannies of varying degrees. Even today, under partial Israeli administration, Hamas and other factions fight for supremacy and ruthlessly murder each other. Another Lebanon, with its incessant civil wars, is much more likely. The lawlessness and chaos that prevail in Gaza since Israel's withdrawal is a good prospect of what would happen if Israel – foolishly and under the pressure of "world opinion" – were to abandon this territory. As for demilitarization, that is totally unlikely. Because – with Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, most of which are in a declared state of war with Israel, at its borders – an irresistible power vacuum would be created. Despite pious promises, the arms merchants of the world would find a great new market and the neighboring hostile Arab countries would be happy to supply anything else that might be needed.

■ **Myth:**: Israel should make "confidence-building gestures" for the sake of peace.

Reality: What really is it that the world expects Israel to do for the sake of peace? Most of the 22 Arab countries consider themselves in a state of war with Israel and don't even recognize its "existence." That has been going on for over sixty years. Isn't it about time that the Arabs made some kind of a "gesture?" Could they not for instance terminate the constant state of war? Could they not stop launching rockets into Israel from areas that Israel has abandoned for the sake of peace? Could they not stop the suicide bombings, which have killed hundreds of Israelis and which have made extreme security measures – such as the defensive fence and convoluted bypass roads – necessary? Any of these would create a climate of peace and would indeed be the "confidence-building gestures" that the world hopes for.

Countless "peace conferences" to settle this festering conflict have taken place. All have ended in failure because of the intransigence of the Arabs. President Clinton, toward the end of his presidency, convened a conference with the late unlamented Yasser Arafat and Ehud Barak, the prime minister of Israel at that time. Mr. Barak offered virtually everything that Arafat had requested, except the partition of Jerusalem and the acceptance of the so-called refugees, their descendants having swollen from the 650,000 who fled the nascent state of Israel during the War of Liberation, to an incredible 5 million. Arafat left in a huff and started his infamous intifada instead, a bloody war that has cost thousands of Palestinian and Israeli lives. Israel is America's staunchest ally and certainly its only true friend in that area of the world. It is in our national interest that reality, not myths, govern our policy.

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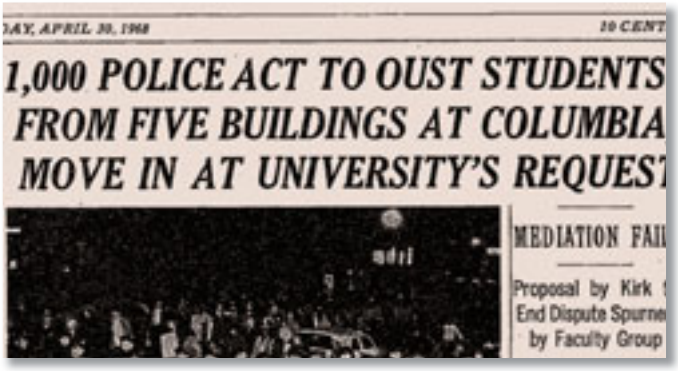
Up in Smoke

The Scrapbook took a stroll down memory lane the other day, courtesy of an interesting item in the current issue of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

Not too many people today remember the 1968 student strike at Columbia University, which introduced the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) to most Americans and made a 15-minute celebrity of strike leader Mark Rudd. Among other things, it established a pattern of behavior that was to be repeated at other institutions of higher learning—Harvard, Wisconsin, Cornell, etc.—over the next several years: a demonstration, followed by the occupation of a building which, in turn, led to the destruction of university property, resulting in the arrival of local police who (no doubt with some enthusiasm) cracked a few heads, yielding widespread academic/media sympathy for the demonstrators.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1,000 POLICE ACT TO OUST STUDENTS FROM FIVE BUILDINGS AT COLUMBIA MOVE IN AT UNIVERSITY'S REQUEST

MEDIATION FAI

Proposal by Kirk End Dispute Spurne by Faculty Group

From Columbia, certain images remain indelible: a photograph of a student sitting at the desk of President Grayson Kirk, smoking one of the president's cigars; the smoldering, ransacked office of history Professor Orest Ranum, whose files had been raided and methodically burned, destroying 10 years of research for a textbook about early modern European history. The irony of that particular aspect of the affair is that Ranum had been sympathetic to the students but, when the strike became violent, had implored them to avoid a clash that would harm all involved.

At the time, the SDS claimed that Ranum's work had been destroyed by rampaging cops, a version of events that was swiftly accepted by the Columbia authorities and has since become the received wisdom. But according to the *Chronicle*, none other than Mark Rudd gave a speech in 2006 at Drew University in which he revealed that, in truth, one of his striking colleagues, John "J.J." Jacobs (now deceased), was responsible.

> I didn't know that he was going to target Professor Ranum, but I suspect that he knew exactly whose office he was breaking into. J.J. hated hypocritical liberals, and the professor, who had tried to stop the original occupation . . . by saying he was sympathetic to our ends but not our means, had become an opponent of the strike.

Rudd, to his credit, is remorseful about the sequence of events; and Ranum, who was ostracized by faculty colleagues for turning against the strike and welcoming police intervention, later left Columbia for Johns Hopkins, and now lives in retirement in France.

The Scrapbook, with its customary humility, believes that the Columbia strike—much more than the Berkeley "Free Speech Movement" four years earlier—ought to be better known as a pivotal incident in the history of the sixties, and the suicide of liberalism in the United States. The anti-intellectual violence and anarchy that followed it on hundreds of campuses during the next few years left an indelible impression on many Americans, as did the transformation of the SDS and other left-wing organizations into the radical Weathermen and their campaigns of urban mayhem and murder.

Of course, not everyone sees it this way—President Obama's Chicago neighbor and friend William Ayers, a high-ranking Weatherman, famously told the *New York Times* on September 11, 2001, "I don't regret setting bombs [and] I feel we didn't do enough"—but in the present climate it is worth noting that one of the signal symbolic acts of our modern domestic drama, the deliberate destruction by fire of a liberal scholar's life's work, was committed by left-wing student radicals who, nearly a half-century later, remain celebrated on stage and screen and in the annals written by Orest Ranum's fellow historians. ♦

Handcuffs Immortal

Henry Louis "Skip" Gates, the Harvard professor and friend of Barack Obama's, was back in the news again last week: He has graciously decided to donate the handcuffs used to arrest him in Cambridge last year to the Smithsonian's new National Museum of African American History and Culture. They now belong to the ages.

How did this little miracle come to pass? In an interview with the *New York Times*, Gates explained that a few months ago he and the arresting officer, James Crowley, met for a drink at the River Gods cafe (shades of the

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famous White House "beer summit"). Crowley gave the handcuffs he had used in the incident to Gates. Gates then passed them on to the Smithsonian.

Since when do arrestees get souvenirs of their run-ins with the law? That was THE SCRAPBOOK's first reaction. But Cambridge is a special place, so we can only assume the taxpayers there don't mind a little bit of generosity with government property. After all, if they did, they wouldn't be living in Massachusetts in the first place. And as for Gates's grandiosity, we choose to believe that his gesture is less about making sure the Smithsonian has some gee-gaw related to his arrest and more about making sure the Smithsonian has a totem connected to him.

But the most satisfying note in all of this is learning that Gates and Crowley were able to meet for drinks without the intermediating presence of President Obama. It's nice to know that even in Cambridge, people are finding a way to muddle through without him. ♦

Fifty Bernie Madoffs

Here's some news to keep you tossing and turning in the middle of the night.

The Pew Center reports that there was a $1 trillion gap "at the end of fiscal year 2008 between the $2.35 trillion states had set aside to pay for employees' retirement benefits and the $3.35 trillion price tag of those promises." Yes, that's trillion with a *t*—one followed by 12 zeroes.

The report makes for grim reading. This is a problem that is only getting worse. Some excerpts:

> • In 2000, just over half the states had fully funded pension systems. By 2006, that number had shrunk to six states. By 2008, only four—Florida, New York, Washington, and Wisconsin—could make that claim.
>
> • In eight states—Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, and West Virginia—more than one-third of the total pension liability was unfunded. Two states—Illinois and Kansas—had less than 60 percent of the necessary assets on hand.

Only nine states "were deemed solid performers," and only two states, Alaska and Arizona, "had 50 percent or more of the assets needed." Meanwhile, "forty states were classified as needing improvement" and "twenty of these have no assets on hand to cover their obligations."

And it's not just a question of hard times. "To a significant degree, the $1 trillion reflects states' own policy choices and lack of discipline" such as "failing to make annual payments for pension systems at the levels recommended by their own actuaries; expanding benefits and offering cost-of-living increases without fully considering their long-term price tag or determining how to pay for them; and providing retiree health care without adequately funding it."

The economist Arnold Kling notes Paul Krugman's coinage—"fifty Herbert Hoovers"—to describe the states' inability to spend during the recession and thereby prop up the economy. Noting the Pew report, Kling suggests that "'fifty Bernie Madoffs' would be the way to describe [the states'] pension decisions. Of course, unlike Bernie Madoff, the states will almost certainly be bailed out by the federal government. Which itself is the 51st Bernie Madoff, making promises to future recipients of Social Security and Medicare that it has no ability to keep." Sleep tight. ♦

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Fact-Free— and Proud of It

Reporters have never had much job security. Practicing a craft known for few standards and no barriers to entry, and with a constant flow of young people eager for the romance of low pay and the excitement of sitting through city council budget meetings, and endeavoring to anticipate and accommodate the whims of frequently capricious editors and publishers, journalists have learned that the axe may fall at any second.

Still, Jonathan Springston, a long-serving staff writer for the *Atlanta Progressive News*, may be the first reporter to have gotten the sack for . . . well, for once words fail us. Here is the description from the Fresh Loaf blog in Atlanta:

> Apparently, Springston's affinity for fact-based reporting clashed with [his editor's] vision. And, no, that's not sarcasm. In an e-mail statement, editor Matthew Cardinale says Springston was asked to leave *APN* last week "because he held on to the notion that there was an objective reality that could be reported objectively, despite the fact that that was not our editorial policy at *Atlanta Progressive News*." ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'It was primarily a symbolic gesture. Way back in 1979, in the midst of an energy crisis, Jimmy Carter had solar panels installed on the roof of the White House. They were used to heat water for some White House staffers. 'A generation from now,' said Mr. Carter, 'this solar heater can either be a curiosity, a museum piece, an example of a road not taken, or it can be a small part of one of the greatest and most exciting adventures ever undertaken by the American people, . . . '" (Bob Herbert, *New York Times*, February 13). ♦

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Arnold Beichman, 1913-2010

My friend Arnold Beichman, who died last week at the age of 96, was friendly with the British upper-crust novelist Anthony Powell and knew the New York organized-labor radical "Red Mike" Quill. He rode motorbikes, piloted planes, and could quote stanza after stanza of Heine and Musset in the original. At the left-wing newspaper *PM* in the 1940s, he mostly covered labor and race relations, but he also may have been Wendell Willkie's closest confidant in the press. He met Babe Ruth. He traveled with the FLN in North Africa years before it took power and feasted with Iraqi Christians in the waning days of the Hashemite monarchy. William Howard Taft had just left the presidency when Arnold was born, and Barack Obama had just been elected when Arnold stopped writing his weekly column for the *Washington Times*.

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What Arnold was proudest of was his dogged opposition to Communism every place that it raised its head. Arnold was a mainstay of the Congress for Cultural Freedom in the early 1950s, a labor activist and an indefatigable writer and organizer. There is a funny paradox about anti-Communism. The misdeeds of Communism are today so obvious and well-documented that it requires a certain amount of patience and historical context to understand why, for instance, mobilizing international opinion against the show trials in Czechoslovakia in the late 1940s required any effort at all. So, although Arnold may have been the most fascinating storyteller I have met, he nonetheless gave the impression of being grateful to any listener willing to follow him through the historical twists and turns. His humility about what he had accomplished was the most shocking thing about him. You would find yourself wondering: What is this guy who is funny enough to be Kingsley Amis's friend and smart enough to be Raymond Aron's doing talking to me?

Arnold grew up in the overcrowded, polyglot, heavily Jewish Lower East Side of Manhattan. His family was from near Zhitomir in the Ukraine—something I recall only because of Arnold's delight at accepting an invitation to Zhitomir to serve as an election observer after the collapse of the Soviet Union. If I remember right, Arnold's parents wanted him to be a rabbi. He had certainly, by early adulthood, acquired a formidable education in Scripture. One day, after he had explained some religious doctrine or other, he asked me bluntly: "Do you believe in God?" I answered, a bit awkwardly, that I did.

"Why?" Arnold almost shouted. I mumbled something about how it seemed the most reasonable explanation of why there was something instead of nothing.

"Good!" he said, with what looked like surprise, having obviously gone over the question dozens of times with people a lot more learned than me. "That is one of the best reasons to believe. Still …," he said, nodding his head skeptically. "I dunno. I just can't."

That is what conversations with Arnold were like. In 1997 or so, he invited me to address a weekly lunch group he hosted at Stanford. A student asked me a question about political correctness, and I told him it wasn't too much to worry about, at which point Arnold's voice bellowed from across the room: "You're wrong!"

Arnold's bluntness was of the tough kind, not the rude kind. Maybe from reading Solzhenitsyn, I associate this kind of toughness with Eastern Europe. Arnold might possibly have survived as a *zek*. He never owned a winter coat. My wife and I remember walking for blocks along Pennsylvania Avenue on a February night, heading for a cassoulet restaurant in the 18-degree cold with Arnold and his elegant wife Carroll. We were all bundled up in scarves and hats. Arnold wore a blazer. He would have been about 87 at the time.

Why did those of us who knew Arnold love him so much? He mixed a lot of virtues that seldom go together in the same person: authority and curiosity, ambition and generosity, brilliance and humility. He was a battler who had the happiest of happy marriages, a drawer-of-lines-in-the-sand with a gift for friendship, a complex thinker who enjoyed the company of children. Last August, when my father-in-law died, Arnold sent a buoying note to my wife. I hadn't heard from Arnold in months, and when you have a 96-year-old friend, a long silence can mean all sorts of things. So I wrote him back to ask how he and Carroll were doing in British Columbia—"Utopiaville," as Arnold called it, where they lived surrounded by apple orchards.

"We are both well," he wrote back, "I in particular, since I have staying with us in B.C. at el rancho grande my great-grandson, his mother, and my daughter, the Japanologist professor, and her Japanese husband. As the Man sayeth, my cup runneth over." And that was the last I ever heard from him.

Christopher Caldwell

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The Summit of Folly

Well, so much for the pivot to jobs. Late last week, the Obama administration and congressional Democrats made clear that, rather than turn to voters' economic concerns in this winter of discontent, they want to persist in pushing the health care proposals they have championed for a year—proposals voters have rejected by every means at their disposal, from expressing (a still growing) opposition in polls, to scolding members of Congress in town hall meetings, to handing Ted Kennedy's Senate seat to a Republican.

It is now clear that the "summit" the president has called for February 25 is not intended to consider different approaches to health care financing, but rather to create an illusion of momentum that might just lull disoriented congressional Democrats into ramming the health care bill through the budget reconciliation process.

Leading up to the summit, Harry Reid, Nancy Pelosi, and White House officials aim to produce a bill that bridges not the yawning gap between Democratic and Republican proposals but the technical differences between House and Senate Democrats. The House and Senate bills do differ on some issues—a government insurance plan, the details of tax increases and Medicare cuts—but they agree on the big picture, which would be the essence of a combined bill: a massively ambitious, costly, intrusive, inefficient, and clumsy combination of mandates, taxes, subsidies, regulations, and new government programs intended over time to replace the American health insurance industry with an enormous federal entitlement while failing to address the rising costs at the heart of our health care dilemma.

It would raise taxes in a tough economic time, cut Medicare benefits without putting the program on a sustainable footing, create a new open-ended entitlement as we confront daunting deficits, and displace the insurance arrangements of millions.

The public has had a good look at all this for a year, and has hardly been tentative in its judgments. A clear majority in every major poll this year has opposed the Democrats' approach. Approval for President Obama's handling of health care is just 36 percent, according to the latest CBS News poll. The Democrats have witnessed the transformation of one of their strongest policy issues with voters into one of their weakest, and in the process have lost the trust of voters. But their leaders nonetheless seem committed to forcing their health care agenda down the public's throat.

The timing of this move (just after a congressional recess, when members of Congress won't be spending much time at home again until Easter), the nature of the health care summit (a public relations spectacle intended to generate buzz in the political press more than to appeal to the public), and the character of the legislative plan (a quick hard push through reconciliation to avoid debate, amendments, and too much time to think) all seem designed to bamboozle rank and file Democratic members of Congress into taking a suicidal vote. But they are also aimed to slip the bill past the public, not yet alert to the danger. This stratagem is the perfect finale to a yearlong circus that has exposed the ugliest side of our politics.

With their plans to press ahead now clear, the Democrats have given Republicans little choice but to restate the full indictment of Obamacare at the summit and beyond. They might start with the Democratic push to cut Medicare Advantage benefits, forcing millions of seniors out of the coverage they enjoy today as early as this fall. They could follow that up by highlighting the deal to exempt union workers' health plans from the "Cadillac tax" through 2017, which is said to be crucial to House liberal support. This giveaway is worth $60 billion over a decade to the Democrats' big labor benefactors and will be rightly viewed as outrageous by the vast majority of Americans who are not in union plans. Of course, there's also the job-killing employer mandate, the regressive requirement to buy insurance, the regulations that will drive up premiums for the insured, and on and on. There is certainly no shortage of material to make the case—and contrast it with the conservative health agenda.

One way or another, this ill-advised legislative process is nearing its end. It will either conclude with the Democrats putting their blinkered and misguided proposal aside, at last to pursue genuine, incremental, modest, and practical health care reforms addressed to the actual problems our system confronts, or it will end with the passage of a ruinous bill rejected by the public and likely to exacerbate both the collapse of our public finances and the explosion of health insurance costs.

It is now up to Republicans and the many Democrats in Congress who increasingly see the folly of their leaders' ways to make sure this process concludes not with the enactment of Obamacare but with the initiation of a real health care debate. Listen to the voters: Scrap this bill and start over.

—James C. Capretta & Yuval Levin

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Evan Bayh, Tough Chooser

Another senator who's too good for Washington.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Some of us always suspected that Evan Bayh was a Tough Chooser, and he proved us right this month when, with a disdainful flourish, he announced he wouldn't try to get himself reelected senator from Indiana. He had been giving off signals for a long time, talking about the "tough choices" that his fellow legislators refuse to make to solve the government's fiscal problems, without once mentioning what those tough choices entail or, for that matter, making a tough choice himself.

Bayh did this most recently on February 3, when President Obama took questions for what seemed like hours at a meeting of Democratic senators. Bayh was the last senator to seize the microphone. He asked one of those questions that isn't really a question, the kind that carefully combed TV reporters ask at presidential press conferences—ten pounds of peroration and two ounces of query. Ostensibly the subject was the perennial favorite of Tough Choosers, "this issue of the deficit and rising debt."

He went on for two and a half minutes. "The public and average citizen," Bayh said, "understand in the long run this is unsustainable." Therefore, "we've got a job to do." But would we have the courage to do it, Bayh wondered? "Are we willing to make some of the tough decisions to actually head this country in a better direction?"

In a perfect world the president would have gazed at Evan Bayh for a moment and said, "No," then got in his limo and gone home to take a nap. Instead President Obama responded as he always does to these nonquestions, like a circus cannon blowing out gushers of confetti, clouding the air with the sparkly bits of verbiage that dazzle his admirers. For present purposes the president's answer—which at 1,400 words lasted nearly ten minutes—was less revealing than Bayh's question about his unnamed "tough decisions."

It was the kind of attention-getter that tough choosers love. Bayh claimed to speak for the bewildered common folk; he kept an antiseptic distance from his own party, hovering slightly above the gathering, where the air is cleaner; and when he asked the president and his colleagues whether *we* were going to make those tough decisions, he really meant *you*. For the Tough Chooser assumes that everyone knows *he* will make those tough choices; he has a stack of David

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Broder columns to prove it. This is a sure sign that a Tough Chooser is ready to abandon politics altogether.

The last rash of Tough Choosing politicians appeared in the 1990s: Senators Bill Bradley, Paul Tsongas, Warren Rudman, a handful of others. They fashioned themselves "raging moderates" or "radical centrists," hoping that the oxymorons would sound ironic and provocative rather than nonsensical. They were neither ideological nor partisan, they said; they were problem solvers, pragmatic idealists and idealistic pragmatists. And they were sick at heart over the government's deficit and its inability to make the tough choices that would bring the federal budget into balance.

So they all quit. "Politics is broken," said Bradley upon his retirement, and Tsongas, having also retired, echoed the phrase, saying "government is broken." Rudman was a Republican Tough Chooser, with a brusquer demeanor: "I'm tired of it," he said, heading for the door. "I'm angry at the entire government."

When Bayh made his exit this month, with his wife and hapless sons arranged behind him as if posing for a hostage video, he made sure to sound the same timeless theme of a broken government, gummed up by partisanship and manned by pols too self-interested or gutless to muck out the works. After the deep drafts of self-flattery that have become common in political rhetoric—"I have often been a lonely voice for balancing the budget . . . I have fought . . . I have continued to fight . . . I have championed"—he announced that "Congress is not operating as it should." There was "partisanship" rather than "progress," "slogans" in place of "solutions," "alliteration" instead of "action." (I made up the last one.)

Tough Choosers always insist that the problems of the present era are unprecedented. The past, in contrast to the fallen world we face now, was idyllic, and the golden age always ended the day before yesterday. Bayh fondly recollected the years when his father Birch Bayh worked as a senator, in the 1970s, a prelapsarian era when legislators "worked together" and "got things done." The voters at the time saw it differently. At the end of Birch Bayh's third term, they voted him and 11 of his colleagues out of office in a mass turnover that was truly unprecedented—a kind of electoral upchuck. If the Senate was getting things done in the 1970s, they were evidently the wrong things.

Evan's disgust at contemporary Washington politics, like his memory of political history, is necessarily selective. Bayh grew up in Washington and has spent his professional life in government—"public service" is the preferred term—and like many government lifers he has boasted of its low pay and impoverishing effects. Yet Washington politics offers ways for our public servants to avoid the poorhouse. Bayh's wife, a former lawyer for the drugmaker Eli Lilly, has tracked her husband's rise in power and influence by becoming a "professional director" on about a dozen corporate boards.

It's nice work if you can get it, and the husbands and wives of senators can get it if they try, and they don't have to try very hard. Most companies are delighted to have the spouse of a national legislator on their board of directors, even when, or especially when, the couples refute any suggestion of conflict of interest, as the Bayhs do, by simply denying it. In 2007, Sylvia Smith of the *Fort Wayne Journal Gazette* did the math and discovered that Mrs. Bayh, working no more than 36 weeks a year, was making well over a million dollars annually from her directorships. Politics may be broken, but that doesn't mean politicians have to go broke.

Bayh complains, as Tough Choosers do, about the low tone of our political discourse, but he can fling the partisan poo as well as the most highly paid party gorilla—a Begala, say, or even a Carville. As a passionate centrist, a tough-minded moderate, he of course voted for the invasion of Iraq in 2003. He abandoned his support a year later, when he discovered to his horror that some of the people involved in the invasion might actually get hurt. In an arm-waving address at the Democratic National Convention in 2008, Bayh expressed his revulsion by leveling a charge of negligent homicide at George Bush and Richard Cheney: "Our brave soldiers were killed because of their reckless incompetence."

Bayh's relationship to the Iraq war—being both for it and against it—demonstrates how a man cultivates a reputation for fierce independence and nonpartisanship, thus earning the admiration of a press corps that likewise fancies itself to be fiercely independent and nonpartisan. Bayh's specialty is the rightward feint. He showed it first in Washington during the Clinton impeachment trial, when anonymous press reports suggested that the new senator from Indiana might buck his party and boldly vote against President Clinton. He didn't. He publicly puzzled over whether to buck his party and boldly support the nominations of John Roberts and Samuel Alito, then didn't. More recently, last December, he did buck his party and boldly voted against raising the government's debt limit; the next month, he voted with his party to raise the debt limit. Last year he gave bold speeches against government spending while voting for the auto bailout, the health care "public option," and the $787 billion stimulus package.

In practice, in other words, Evan Bayh is just a reliable, conventional, loyal Democrat. Nothing wrong with that! In his reputation, however, Bayh has wanted to be so much more. When he says he's not satisfied with politics as usual, he really means it. So he's become a Tough Chooser. With the forelock tugging, the tortured rumination, the joint resolutions with John McCain and Olympia Snowe, the lectures to his colleagues about the tough choices they refuse to face, he can live rhetorically, in a realm of pure possibility.

In the realm of politics, though, you have to choose. You have to join the side you're on. You have to make the tough decisions. Which is why the Tough Choosers always quit. ♦

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Blame Americans First

Democrats lose patience with democracy.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

What's the clearest sign the Obama agenda is in trouble? That's easy: the string of jeremiads in the pages of the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and other outlets of fashionable opinion. Unable to tout the administration's successes, and worried about Republican ascendancy, liberals have assigned responsibility for the mess they're in neither to their program nor to their methods but to larger, structural faults in American politics and society. Beginning with you.

You aren't too bright, for one thing. After all, opines Jacob Weisberg in *Newsweek*, the "biggest culprit" behind "our political paralysis" is the "childishness, ignorance, and growing incoherence of the public at large." You simply do not know what's good for you. "On many issues these days," writes the *Washington Post*'s Steven Pearlstein, "the American people are badly confused." "The people may have spoken," writes the *New Yorker*'s James Surowiecki. "It's just not clear that they're making any sense." In a blog post titled "Too Dumb to Thrive," *Time* magazine's Joe Klein cuts to the chase: "It is very difficult to thrive in an increasingly competitive world if you're a nation of dodos."

The problem, as Weisberg sees it, is that America "simultaneously demands and rejects action on unemployment, deficits, health care, and other problems." Note the myopia. For Weisberg, the only conceivable "action" on any issue is limited to the policy preferences of liberal Democrats. No other options spring to mind.

This is nonsense. Just because the public says the economy is important does not necessarily mean it has to support a stimulus measure that has added massively to the debt without much benefit. Just because the public is concerned with rising health care costs does not mean that it has to support a bill that could alter existing health care arrangements and increase costs in the long-term. Steven Pearlstein writes that Americans "want to do something about global warming." No they don't. Global warming came dead last in a recent Pew survey of public priorities.

Thomas L. Friedman of the 'New York Times' wrote in a September 2009 column that a dictatorship, when 'led by a reasonably enlightened group of people, as China is today,' has 'great advantages' over democratic systems.

The reason health care, cap and trade, and the other blocks of Obama's New Foundation are unpopular isn't public ignorance. It's that the public sees them as counterproductive—and in many cases beside the point. The people's representatives have responded to a variety of signals, from falling poll numbers, to town hall protests, to GOP victories in Virginia, New Jersey, and Massachusetts. Which is precisely how democracy is supposed to function.

And that's the problem, says Kurt Andersen in *New York* magazine. "American democracy has gotten way too democratic." The "thoughtful, educated, well-off, well-regarded gentlemen" who designed our Constitution "wanted a government run by an American elite like themselves." But the "populist impulse" abroad in the land today has scared legislators into obeying the people's demands.

It was not always thus. "In the old days," Andersen laments, "the elite media really did control the national political discourse" and "presidents and congressional leaders could pretty well manage the policy conversations" without the public trying to butt in. But there's no going back now; "maybe our republic's constitutional operating system simply can't scale up to deal satisfactorily with a heterogenous population of 310 million."

This liberal uneasiness with democracy is not new. In 2003, in *The Future of Freedom*, Fareed Zakaria made the case against too much public involvement in government. In 2008, in *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, Thomas Friedman dreamed of America becoming "China for a day" so that he could impose his environmental agenda on a truculent populace. In a 2009 *New York Times* column, Friedman wrote that a dictatorship, "when it is led by a reasonably enlightened group of people, as China is today," has "great advantages" over democratic systems. In the *Atlantic Monthly*, James Fallows writes that "whatever is wrong with today's Communist leadership [in Beijing], it is widely seen as pulling the country nearer to its full potential rather than pushing it away." Nevertheless, the Democrats probably aren't going to run on "Communist China Does It Better."

What makes the liberal jeremiads confusing is that they work at cross purposes. On one hand, you've got the attacks on the people's intelligence and representative government. On the other, you've got the attacks on American institutions for not

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being representative enough. Which is it? Are the people the problem, or is their government? According to Fallows, it's the latter: "Our government is old and broken and dysfunctional, and may even be beyond repair."

The culprit is the Senate, which gives equal say to states with small populations and requires 60 votes to pass legislation. Fallows says these minority rights have turned the Senate "into a deep freeze and a dead weight." "America is not yet lost," Paul Krugman writes in the *New York Times*, "but the Senate is working on it." In a *Huffington Post* blog, Senator Tom Harkin, Democrat of Iowa, writes that special interests are "using the filibuster to stop legislation that would benefit the little guy," whether the little guy likes it or not.

You can make a persuasive argument that the filibuster has been deployed too frequently in recent years, especially when it has prevented presidents, Republican and Democrat, from staffing their administrations. Nevertheless, the Senate and the filibuster are there for good reasons: to defuse momentary passions that could have unintended and harmful consequences for the country.

The system is designed to ensure broad consensus before Congress enacts major reforms. Such consensus existed during the New Deal and Great Society. And there was consensus behind certain elements of Reagan's and Bush's and Clinton's programs, as well. That was not the case when George W. Bush attempted to overhaul Social Security, however. The public agreed with Bush that there was a problem, but it did not like his solution. It has had the same reaction to Obama's proposals.

The liberal program is in disarray because liberals have failed to establish general agreement. They have found that simple majorities do not automatically translate into programmatic success. And when they are met with public opposition and institutional resistance, they do what comes naturally. They blame Americans first. ♦

Grand Old Tea Party

The insurgents meet the insiders.

BY MARY KATHARINE HAM

It was a good week for proclamations, with Washington conservative leaders, tea party activists, and the GOP all touting statements of principle as thousands of conservatives came to town for the annual CPAC conference. The GOP's statement has yet to be released, but each group's intentions have nonetheless been scrutinized and parsed by the media in what feels like a political version of the eHarmony compatibility test.

Will the tea partiers drag the GOP toward the unelectable fringe? Will the conservative movement tap into the antiestablishment energy of the tea partiers? Will the Republican party adopt the ideas of either? Can they all come together without sullying the grassroots authenticity of the tea party movement? Will they or won't they form a third party? Is this the beginning of a beautiful relationship, or is someone going to get used?

Sixteen miles from the Capitol, at the Mount Vernon home of President George Washington, a group of conservatism's gray eminences gathered to sign the Mount Vernon Statement—a noncontroversial (to conservatives) manifesto to unite and recommit their movement to the "ideas of the American Founding" in the "critical political and policy battles ahead."

As a George Washington impersonator presided over the signing of the oversized Declaration-style document, a couple of newcomers mingled with such Beltway fixtures as former attorney general Ed Meese and the Family Research Council's Tony Perkins. Jenny Beth Martin and Mark Meckler of tea party Patriots, a loosely organized national umbrella group, had come to town for the unveilings of both this document and a tea party document.

It wasn't the only odd juxtaposition of outsiders with insiders this week. A handful of tea party leaders had an hours-long meeting with RNC chair Michael Steele at the Capitol Hill Club—a locale the media gleefully chortled was too elitist for the group. "The club is a place for Oysters Rockefeller and pictures of Eisenhower, not tricorn hats and Don't-Tread-on-Me flags," Dana Milbank wrote in the *Washington Post* (proving either he had never set foot in the decidedly non-swank building or assumed his readers wouldn't know better).

But what the press often portrays as a prickly fight over the soul of the Republican party looked more like a first date, with both sides attempting to make a good impression. The tea partiers wanted to introduce themselves, and Republicans and conservative leaders were happy to meet them in light of their new electoral credibility after Scott Brown's win in Massachusetts.

"The atmosphere was very positive," said RNC communications director Doug Heye of the meeting, which he said was initiated by tea party activists and ran more than an hour beyond its hour-long slot on Steele's schedule. Steele "made it very clear that he was going to answer every question. I think that really created a lot of good will with the people who were there in the room."

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When tea party activists held an unveiling for their own document—the Contract From America—at CPAC on Thursday, heavy hitters like former House majority leader Dick Armey and Senator Jim DeMint were there, but noticeably took a back seat to tea party activists, who referred to themselves as "leaderless" no fewer than five times.

Ryan Hecker, a Houston lawyer who devised the plan to create a tea party platform using thousands of ideas and online votes from activists, exemplified the unpolished, grassroots nature of the press conference when he fumbled the microphone while stalling for DeMint's arrival. As the mike's crash quieted, he smiled and said, "As you can tell I'm kind of a newbie at this stuff."

Like Hecker, many of the tea party activists at CPAC for the first time this year acknowledged they are new at the game, but are also confident that's their strength. Polling suggests they are right, with voters sour on Washington and both parties. As for the politicians, they made sure to show proper respect to the new activists. Every major speaker gave kudos to the tea party movement from the CPAC dais on Thursday.

House minority leader John Boehner was no exception. "The Republican party should not attempt to co-opt the tea parties," he said. "I think that's the dumbest thing in the world. What we will do as long as I'm the leader is respect them, listen to them, and walk amongst them. The other party will never, ever do that."

The tea partiers are often portrayed unfairly as either far-right rubes or stealth agents of big business. Talking to those at CPAC, it was obvious that being new to the political process doesn't mean they're bad at it.

In the case of the Contract From America, Hecker and California activist Scott Graves seem to have walked a line remarkably well, offering a loosely organized movement some direction without destroying enthusiasm by declaring a list of principles from on high. Thousands of tea party activists submitted policy ideas, the most popular of which could be voted on at the contract website. In the end, the wisdom of crowds created a list of 22 mostly sober and some specific policy ideas, including sunset provisions for regulations, term limits, and rules for greater government transparency. That list will be whittled down to a top 10 in another open, online voting process.

"The process is what's new," said Graves, who spent hours programming ContractFromAmerica.org in his spare time. "The right generally has done a . . . horrible job of presenting anything online, but I think some of the right has picked up on the lessons of 2008."

Indeed, ContractFromAmerica.org is a sophisticated looking site, with the potential to empower rank-and-file tea partiers on matters of substance in a way that even Obama supporters admit his famously people-powered campaign was not able to do. The left-leaning Micah Sifry, cofounder of Personal Democracy Forum, noted that while the Obama campaign marketed itself as "people-centric," it "shared tasks with its supporters but didn't share power." A grassroots movement that is not yoked to a presidential campaign will likely be better suited to do that.

The tea partiers are often portrayed unfairly as either far-right rubes or stealth agents of big business. Talking to those at CPAC, it was obvious that being new to the political process doesn't mean they're bad at it.

But the independence of the tea party movement, and of individual tea party chapters is important, West Chester, Penn., activist Rich Davis told me, because the tea partiers aren't all anti-Obama all the time—a point the national news media often miss.

Davis, a Navy veteran wearing a T-shirt emblazoned with an eagle, "Limited Government," and "In God We Trust," said he's making change happen in his hometown, where an 8-1 left-leaning majority on the local school board was shrunk to a 5-4 advantage for Democrats in the November elections thanks to tea party activism.

"We're getting smart," he said, explaining that knowledge of the local Republican party's committee and endorsement system had allowed conservatives to pick up dozens of vacant spots within the party organization.

Davis began his political activism as a lone counter-protester to the Chester County Peace Movement about two years ago. Standing on the side of a local intersection, homemade sign in hand, he said he first heard the silent majority.

"We were getting a lot of honks, a lot of support," he said. "To turn the honks into votes, we needed to get involved."

Standing alongside a grassroots activist in full tri-cornered patriot regalia, Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform echoed Davis's emphasis on the local.

"These are all ideas that can be done on the national level . . . which is good," Norquist said of the Contract From America. "But they're also ideas that can happen at a state legislative level. There are 513,000 local elected officials in this country. This can be a platform for officials to run in 513,000 elections, not just congressional elections."

Last April 15, when I spoke to North Carolina conservative Ben Hobbs after the first large tea party event, he said what a lot of conservatives were thinking about activism in the wake of Obama's election.

"I might become a little conservative ACORN," he said, referring to the network of leftist "community organizers." "I don't want to be just like them. We can do it politely, but we've got to do more," Hobbs said.

If the tea partiers at CPAC and the attention they're garnering are any indication, "newbies" like Hecker and Davis have learned quickly. ♦

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Rebels on the Right

The GOP establishment feels the heat.

BY FRED BARNES

In his race for Congress from a suburban Chicago district, Ethan Hastert figured to benefit from terrific family connections in the Republican party. His father, Denny, once held the seat and was speaker of the House for eight years. Hastert, 31, raised more campaign money than his opponent in the recent Republican primary, state legislator Randy Hultgren, and at one point had a double-digit lead in polls. Yet he lost.

So did Elizabeth Coulson, a state legislator for 13 years who was favored to win the Republican primary for another suburban House seat outside Chicago. She lost to businessman Robert Dold, 40, who operates a pest control business and was running for office for the first time.

In still another district near Chicago, venture capitalist Joe Walsh, 48, moved back to his hometown of Barrington to run for Congress. Republican party leaders believed Walsh would finish third in the primary to two candidates better known in the district. Walsh won.

In these three primary elections on February 2, we saw something new. The conservative, anti-Washington, antispending backlash against President Obama and congressional Democrats had spread. It affected the outcome of Republican races. And this phenomenon has become a major factor in other Republican contests.

A few years ago, then-Representative J.D. Hayworth of Arizona dismissed the idea of challenging Senator John McCain from the right. McCain's practice of cosponsoring bills with liberal Democrats infuriated conservatives, but his poll numbers in Arizona were just too strong, Hayworth told me. McCain seemed unassailable.

Not in 2010. After losing his House seat in 2006 and becoming a talk radio host, Hayworth announced his candidacy against McCain last week. Given the new political environment, McCain has been forced to take Hayworth and his conservative attacks seriously. McCain is also tilting more to the right himself. The primary is August 24.

Representative Kevin McCarthy: 'I've told a lot of Republicans, "Don't think this is just an anti-Democrat year." There's a movement to throw everybody out.'

In Kentucky, the Republican candidate anointed by Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell and party leaders to succeed retiring Senator Jim Bunning is Secretary of State Trey Grayson. But Grayson is running no better than even against libertarian Rand Paul, an eye doctor, first time candidate, and son of Ron Paul, the Texas congressman. The primary is May 18.

And in Texas, one of Governor Rick Perry's advantages over Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison is that she serves in Washington and he doesn't. "It's Texas versus Washington," Rob Johnson, Perry's campaign manager, says gleefully. The primary is March 2.

To say this trend was unexpected by most Republican officials and the party's campaign consultants is putting it mildly. One of the few Republicans who saw it coming is Marco Rubio, 38, the former Florida house speaker who polled in single digits initially but now leads Governor Charlie Crist in the primary to succeed Senator Mel Martinez. The vote is August 24.

"The issues are so big, so consequential, so generational that many of the rules of political engagement will not apply," Rubio said in a speech at last week's Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington. "For example, a long list of establishment endorsements will not spare you a primary."

When Crist decided to run for the Senate last spring, he did so with the endorsement of the National Republican Senatorial Committee, which ordinarily stays out of primaries. At the time, Republicans were desperate to get a popular figure like Crist to run. They offered the endorsement as an inducement. Now Rubio is using the party's seal of approval against Crist.

Republican senator Jim DeMint of South Carolina was one of Rubio's earliest (and few prominent) backers. "When I endorsed him, . . . the Washington establishment laughed him off," DeMint said in introducing Rubio at CPAC. "Well, they're not laughing now."

The most endangered Republican senator is probably Robert Bennett of Utah, running for his fourth term. (He once said he'd serve only two terms.) Bennett faces four challengers, all claiming to be more conservative than the senator. "He's in more trouble than McCain," a Republican official says.

The grass-roots revolt in the Illinois primaries was all the more telling because it was a near-total surprise. Ethan Hastert's name, rather than an asset, "actually worked against him," says a Republican official who supported him. The *Chicago Tribune* and the *Sun-Times* endorsed his opponent, Hultgren—another surprise.

For Hultgren, the key to winning was staying to the right of Hastert. "I believe we need real conservatism in Washington," he declared. "I'm proud to call myself a real conservative." He

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won, 55 percent to 45 percent. He faces Democrat Bill Foster, who won a special election after Hastert's father resigned, in the general election on November 2.

The success of Dold in the House seat being vacated by Representative Mark Kirk "came out of nowhere," Representative Aaron Schock of Illinois told me. Schock had endorsed the favorite, Coulson. Dold defeated Coulson, 39 percent to 30 percent, in a multiple candidate race.

Once again, the winner ran against Washington and excessive spending. Dold labeled Coulson "a Springfield insider" as a legislator and one who voted for "tax and spend" bills. As a social moderate, Dold nicely fits the district, which President Obama won with 61 percent of the vote in 2008. Kirk, by the way, won the Republican primary for the Senate seat once held by Obama.

What distinguished Walsh's victory was the role of tea party activists. Without them, he would have had little chance of winning. After his victory—Walsh got 35 percent in a six-way race—he traveled to Nashville to speak at the National Tea Party Convention. "I ran as a tea party candidate in the primary, and I'm going to run as a tea party candidate in the general," he said.

When Melissa Bean, the Democratic incumbent, learned that Walsh would be her opponent, she expressed relief, regarding him as the weakest of the Republicans in the primary. Her reaction was reminiscent of how pleased aides of President Carter were in 1980 when Ronald Reagan emerged as his Republican opponent. They were happy to have escaped the awesome juggernaut of a Howard Baker campaign.

Representative Kevin McCarthy of California, who's been recruiting Republican candidates for the House, says Republican incumbents across the country may face tough primary races. "I've told a lot of Republicans, 'Don't think this is just an anti-Democrat year.' There's a movement to throw everybody out."

But it's worse for Democrats. "We have to face this in the primary," McCarthy says. "Democrats have to face it in the general." ♦

Ambassador to Islam?

The United States shouldn't legitimize the OIC.

BY PAUL MARSHALL

On February 13, President Obama announced the appointment of Rashad Hussain, deputy associate White House counsel, as U.S. special envoy to the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Unusually, Obama is continuing a practice initiated by George W. Bush: It was a bad precedent for Bush to set, and it is worse for Obama to continue.

Appointing an American envoy to the OIC gives that organization a legitimacy it does not deserve. The OIC's defining features should be rejected as a matter of principle: Ostensibly a grouping of nations, it has explicitly religious goals, its structure is highly discriminatory, and it promotes a reactionary agenda of delegitimizing Israel and leading international attacks on free speech and free exercise of religion.

Headquartered in Saudi Arabia, the OIC claims to include 57 member states, though one of these is the "State of Palestine." Among its official observer states it lists the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus," a "state" recognized only by Turkey. For America to have official relations with the OIC lends diplomatic cover to both these claims of statehood.

The OIC describes itself as the "collective voice of the Muslim world" and has a department of *Dawa*, "Islamic propagation," which is devoted to the spread of Islam. This raises the question why the United States should send an envoy to an explicitly religious grouping. (Ambassadors to the Vatican relate not to the Church as such but to a temporal sovereign jurisdiction called the Holy See.)

This strange asymmetry produces the preposterous expression "U.S.-Muslim relations." Since the United States is a state and Muslims are a varied body of believers, they cannot have political relations. What would be the meaning of, for example, "U.S.-Christian relations"? In any case, the United States does not stand apart from Muslims: America is home to millions of Muslim citizens, who help elect its government. In fact the United States has more Muslims than at least 16 OIC members—Albania, Bahrain, Benin, Brunei, Comoros, Djibouti, Gabon, Gambia, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Kuwait, Lebanon, Maldives, Qatar, Suriname, and Togo. According to higher estimates of the U.S. Muslim population, it also has more Muslims than 12 others—Cameroon, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritania, Mozambique, Oman, the Palestinian territories, Sierra Leone, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uganda, and the United Arab Emirates. This means that the United States may well have more Muslims than half the countries in the OIC.

The OIC is not only a religious body, but a highly discriminatory one. Although all of its member countries have non-Muslim citizens, it espouses only "causes close to the hearts of over 1.5 billion Muslims" and safeguards "the true values of Islam and the Muslims." This partiality is particularly egregious since in several OIC countries Muslims are not even the majority. They are less than a quarter of the population of Benin, Cameroon,

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Gabon, Guyana, Mozambique, Suriname, Togo, and Uganda. In Nigeria, they are about half. Even in "Muslim" Chad, Malaysia, and Sudan, about a third of the populations are not Muslim. Hence, through their governments' membership in the OIC, hundreds of millions of non-Muslims are corralled into an organization committed to, in the OIC's words, "protect the vital interests of the Muslims" and "galvanize the *Umma* [worldwide Muslim community] into a unified body." Through the OIC, the United States is relating to these non-Muslims not as members of religiously plural societies but as part of a privileged "Muslim world."

The "supreme authority" of the OIC is the "Islamic Summit, composed of Kings and Heads of State and Governments of Member States." This presents further problems, since some of these heads of state are not Muslim, which means that, while visiting the OIC permanent secretariat in Jeddah, they cannot legally practice their religion. Indeed, in December 2005, when the OIC convened in Mecca, where only Muslims may go, the non-Muslim presidents of Albania, Nigeria, and Uganda could not even attend the meeting.

Since Muslims are very diverse, many of them also suffer from discrimination by the OIC. All initiatives that pretend to relate "to Muslims," or to any other religious group, inevitably privilege some Muslims over others. At the OIC, the United States will relate principally to rulers who proclaim Islam as their core political identity. But for most Muslims, this is simply not the case.

Only 15 of the Muslim-majority members have constitutions that provide for Islamic law or principles as a source for general legislation. Most of the world's Muslims live in states that declare themselves secular or do not otherwise give political status to Islam. So, if the United States addresses the "Muslim world," whatever that might be, through the OIC, it affirms that Muslims should be addressed politically as Muslims rather than, say, as Egyptians or Indonesians, or Kurds or Berbers—or liberals or democrats. U.S. recognition of the OIC thus strengthens political Islam against other forms of Islam.

President Obama mentioned possible cooperation with the OIC in education, entrepreneurship, science, technology, health, and opposition to violent extremism—but not in human rights, political freedom, or democracy. The OIC, however, would profit from robust challenges on human rights. It has its very own exclusive human rights charter, the 1990 "Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam," which it claims is complementary to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights but which in fact undermines it.

The OIC declaration's introduction modestly lauds "the civilizing . . . role of the Islamic *Umma* which God made the best nation." It mirrors the universal declaration in structure and language, but after each item says that the right is subject to *sharia* law, which is not defined. The guarantee of free expression, for instance, reads: "Everyone shall have the right to express his opinion freely in such manner as would not be contrary to the principles of the *Sharia*." Article 24 summarizes the document, stating, "All the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic *Sharia*," and Article 25 avers that "the Islamic *Sharia* is the only source of reference for the explanation or clarification of any of the articles of this Declaration." The OIC wants the U.N. Human Rights Council to adopt this declaration, which would be a backward step even for that corrupt organization.

The OIC has many other problems. Following the International Criminal Court's issuance of an arrest warrant against Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur, the OIC invited Bashir to its November 2009 meeting. It suspended Egypt's membership for five years after that country's 1979 peace treaty with Israel. It insists that the international community distinguish between terrorism and what it calls "a legitimate fight for self-determination." It also takes the lead in attacking Western press freedom over such issues as the Danish cartoons, calling for international and national legislation to outlaw "defamation of religion." OIC secretary general Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu claimed that Muslims have "taken the place of Jews during World War II."

If America wants to dispute these positions, it will have to engage in religious debate. One of the OIC's "Subsidiary Organs," of which all member states are automatically members, is the "International Islamic *Fiqh* [Jurisprudence] Academy." The academy's purpose is to help conform human life

The leaders of the OIC in Istanbul, November 2009

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"to the principles of the Islamic *Sharia* at the individual, social as well as international levels" and find "solutions in conformity with the *Sharia*." Its official *fatwas* stipulate that religious freedom requires forbidding anything that might undercut Islam, and call for the judicial punishment of apostasy. Other *fatwas* defend polygamy, husbands preventing their wives from traveling alone, mild beating of spouses, and criminalization of homosexuality.

On what basis could the U.S. government dispute these declarations by OIC-approved jurists about what Islam teaches? Would it try to tell Muslims that they should reject Islamic teachings, a strategy not likely to get very far, or instead argue that these are wrong interpretations of Islam? If the latter, which department of the U.S. government would challenge *fiqh*? Would it be the new envoy, Rashad Hussain, a bright young man who has memorized the Koran but is not a recognized Islamic scholar? Would it be the State Department, which has already attempted to do some amateur theologizing? It is to such conundrums that legitimizing the OIC leads.

Clearly, we must acknowledge that all politics is shaped by religion: Tocqueville even described religion in early America as "the first of their political institutions," but he added that religion "takes no direct part in the government of society." Equally clearly, our diplomacy must recognize the reality that in much of the Muslim world, religion and politics are closely intertwined.

But an official relationship with the OIC goes far beyond this. It means that our government relates to Muslims on the basis of religion, not citizenship; that it treats varied, multiethnic, and multireligious countries as if they were simply and monolithically Muslim; and that it legitimates the notion that these states exist to propagate Islam. Certainly, America needs to talk to the countries of the OIC—as we already do so, through our existing diplomatic relations and through the U.N. and through regional organizations. We should simply continue to do so. ♦

Selling Sudan Down the River

The Obama administration's diplomatic malpractice. BY ROGER KAPLAN

Sudan's Omar al-Bashir

If your diplomacy is founded on mediation and, as Americans are wont to say, playing the honest broker, but one side gets the distinct impression that you are "selling it down the river," either they are paranoid or you are doing something wrong. One possibility does not exclude the other, but according to Roger Winter, possibly the American with the deepest understanding of Sudan, the Obama administration's special envoy to this woebegone land of 41 million people is sending messages likely to dishearten one side while emboldening the other. As a result, the incentive for compromise and cooperation diminishes, and a renewal of all-out war becomes more likely.

To make matters worse, the side being sold down the river—Winter insists he uses the term deliberately—is ours. Several administrations, special envoys, and special administrators of the U.S. Agency for International Development (Winter was one of them) have agreed that aggression has come from the Arab-Islamic regime of Omar al-Bashir in Khartoum. They have also agreed that the South—the Texas-sized territory south of the sources of the Nile and bordering on Kenya and Uganda, where Christianity and traditional African religion predominate—ought to go its separate way if it desires. The Bush administration thought it had nailed that understanding down five years ago in the north-south Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which calls for a referendum on southern independence next January.

The job of the special envoy in this scheme should be to ensure that both sides are observing the agreement and that the United States is prepared to help enforce it. The period before independence, which has less than a year to go, is supposed to be

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characterized by confidence-building measures to assure the two regions that life will go on peacefully in the next phase. In particular, agreements on wealth-sharing (notably from oil) and on the in-between province of Abiyeh were to be hammered out, and violence was to end. Instead, the last year has witnessed a recrudescence of violence in the South at a level unseen since the de facto termination of the north-south war some ten years ago. It has gone largely unnoticed by the outside world, which pays attention only to the "ethnic cleansing" in the western province of Darfur. (Darfur is overwhelmingly Muslim, but more African than Arab.)

Blame for this violence depends on whose finger is pointing. Southerners say militias are armed by Khartoum and paid to do mischief. The government of Sudan takes a "Who, us?" attitude, noting that the southerners have never governed themselves and are prone to tribal rivalries and fights over women and cattle. The special envoy, retired Air Force general Scott Gration, recently seemed to lend support to this frankly neo-colonialist view by qualifying the autonomous government of South Sudan as a failed-state-in-the-making.

Where failed states are concerned, Roger Winter observes, it is difficult to find a better example than the state hijacked in 1989 by Omar al-Bashir's then-National Islamic Front (later renamed the National Congress party) with the express aim of preventing North-South reconciliation. Since then, he adds, the Bashir regime has appropriated the northern economy, devastated Darfur, and is now keeping a grip on the South's oil wealth despite the stipulation in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement that it must be shared half and half.

Winter and the Southern government he advises (after decades in the region as head of the U.S. Committee on Refugees and as a high-ranking U.S. government official) believe Khartoum has no intention of implementing the practical steps, spelled out in the peace agreement, designed to facilitate an amicable divorce between the two regions, joined together in one of those fits of geographic absent-mindedness that characterized 19th-century British imperialism.

In point of fact, colonization in Sudan was a bit more complicated than that, involving Egyptian politics and the passage to India. But among textbook examples of the mindless way *de*-colonization occurred, Sudan independence, in 1956, belongs in chapter one. In over 50 years, the country has had no peace, notwithstanding paper agreements. Enmity between Arab and African has persisted. Intra-tribal suspicions have deepened. The region has remained volatile, with Uganda, Kenya, and Congo, to name only the bigger regional players, all threatened by destabilization and civil war if the lid flies off in Sudan. Slavery, rapine, population displacement, and village-burning continue to be used with impunity as instruments of political competition in what some call peace.

The United States has poured some $9 billion into Sudan since signing off on the peace agreement in 2005. Where all the money has gone would make an interesting assignment for GAO sleuths. In the meantime, Khartoum has been unable or unwilling to suggest an acceptable demarcation line between the two Sudans, and it has blocked the establishment of the voter rolls needed to hold the referendum.

Observers believe the pro-independence side would easily win a free and fair vote. The national presidential and parliamentary elections now scheduled for April might offer a dry run. Bashir and Salva Kiir, who is president of South Sudan, insist the elections will be peaceful.

While Kiir concentrates on preparing the South for the referendum and its aftermath, Bashir promises to respect the result. In areas under Khartoum's control, however, restrictions on press freedom and detention of opposition activists and leaders on baseless charges are casting doubt on the electoral process. The Southern government too has been cited by observers, including Human Rights Watch, for harassing political opponents. In an atmosphere of general mistrust, the most neutral thing that can be said about these elections is that each side is going to accuse the other of rigging them.

Against this background, the Obama administration, according to Winter, has sent Sudan, both North and South, confusing signals; at worst, it is creating the impression, he says, that its priority is to gain Bashir's goodwill.

The Bashir government, for its part, believes it is no longer cornered by a combination of U.S. pressure (in the form of sanctions, renewed in October), international condemnation (the International Criminal Court's indictment of Omar al-Bashir on war crimes charges and crimes against humanity in Darfur), and a decidedly pro-South tilt on the part of U.S. representatives. What is not at all clear is what this is supposed to do for the U.S. interests in the region.

It is possible the situation will work itself out to no one's complete satisfaction but to no one's utter despair either, and General Gration will be vindicated in his engagement policy. The idea is that if Bashir does not feel threatened, he will become more reasonable than he has been in the past 20 years. On the other hand, if he remains true to his past character and things break down again, a new round of fighting will follow. This will complicate our strategic position in the Indian Ocean, where undernourished teenage pirates run circles around us even as we discover a new terror-war front in the southern cone of the Arabian peninsula.

Absent a charismatic, unifying figure such as the South's late John Garang, who died in a helicopter crash shortly after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, it appears unlikely Sudan can do better as one nation on the brink of civil war than it can as two nations with grudges but also with common interests. Winter's position therefore is that the United States should be more explicitly pro-South, which would have the advantage of deterring Northern aggression while paving the way for a new Western-aligned nation in an extremely strategic region. ♦

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Love Among the Ruins

Caring for orphans, ransoming hostages, burying the dead—it's all in a day's work for Father Rick Frechette

By Matt Labash

In the barbaric cave for the dead
Known in Creole as simply 'mog'
My trembling hand blesses them
May the angels lead you far, far from here
And do so in all haste
You and this throng of dead that surround you
—Father Rick Frechette, from
Haiti: The God of Tough Places, The Lord of Burnt Men

Port-au-Prince, Haiti

As disaster-chasers go, I'm pretty lousy. It's ten days since the most catastrophic earthquake in modern history shook Haiti loose from its ever fragile moorings, yet the only disaster I've come near is at the Hartford airport in Connecticut. The iron-willed meter maid at the Continental desk informs me that Acts of Nature or God aside, my bag is 50 pounds overweight, and I'm going to have to dump provisions I'm carrying to Haiti.

Wishing to make my flight, I comply, muttering profanities as I hurriedly unload Clif bars, bottled water, and whiskey into a rickety box. As I do this, a band of ten or so curious Haitians watch my struggles, with their leader, an American Catholic priest of the Passion-

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Father Rick Frechette helps carry a coffin to a mass burial in Titanyen, north of Port-au-Prince.

BRIAN VANDER BRUG / LOS ANGELES TIMES / POLARIS

ist order, Father Rick Frechette, looking on bemused.

"Everything alright?" he asks.

Though it's taking me a while to reach the land of newly minted loss (in 40 seconds' time, at least 230,000 Haitians were killed on January 12, one in every 50), I've come to Hartford to collect a man who, no matter where he goes, can't seem to escape the dead. Father Rick, as most call him, has lived in Haiti for 22 years. He is founder and director of the Haitian branch of the international children's organization Nuestros Pequenos Hermanos ("Our Little Brothers and Sisters").

In the Tabarre section of Port-au-Prince, Frechette runs St. Damien Hospital, Haiti's only free pediatric hospital. He also oversees an orphanage and the sprawling St. Luke

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missions, a boots-on-the-ground enterprise responsible for everything from its 18 simple street-schools in a country where fewer than 75 percent of children attend school, to running water and food to the city's most ferocious slums.

Additionally, every Thursday—since long before the earthquake—Frechette and a band of Haitian volunteers trek to the city morgue and claim the nameless dead, who lie naked in bloated heaps on a blood-streaked concrete floor. "You've heard of *Tuesdays with Morrie*," Frechette smiles, "this is *Thursdays with the Krokmo*" (a Creole pejorative term for *undertaker*. It translates as the "death hook," meaning the show is over). The place is jammed and the dead often piled seven or eight high. The workers there are so inured to the stench and spectacle, that Frechette has seen a morgue attendant slaloming on roller blades around the bodies and workers eating their lunch while sitting on stacks of cadavers as though on breaktime in the office kitchenette.

In Haiti, even before the quake, dead bodies were nothing more than background music—as commonplace as they are unnoticed. If they didn't end up in the stark death-cave that is the general hospital morgue, they were burned in the streets on the spot where they died (a pragmatic hygiene concern). The decency and sentimentality that a better-developed society affords are luxuries here. Father Rick and his men gather the bodies themselves, packing them into makeshift coffins fashioned from supermarket cardboard boxes. They then truck them outside the city, up a sun-bleached highway that runs alongside the Caribbean Sea, to the rolling wastelands of Titanyen, which translates from Creole as the "fields of less than nothing." A New Orleans-style Haitian jazz-funeral band—all horns and drums—plays graveside. Father Rick, an irreverent sort, calls them "The Grateful Dead." Then he and his men plant the cardboard coffins in large holes dug by their own gravediggers, endowing their cargo in death with a tiny modicum of the dignity that eluded them in life.

After the earthquake, there was an overflow crowd at the morgue, thousands of dead laid out in the street in front of it. 'They were picking them up with backhoes and bucket-loaders.'

When I meet Father Rick in Hartford, he is torn between two families. In the quake, he lost about 10 people on his staff, with many more unaccounted for. Several of his missions are damaged or completely demolished. Many of his Haitian employees are homeless, living in tent cities in public parks. But he missed the quake itself and feels bad about it—a shepherd, he tells me, should ride such episodes out with his flock. And even though he rushed back to Haiti in the chaotic days that followed, he was forced to return to Hartford after several days to tend to pressing business stateside. His cancer-stricken mother was dying. He had to see her off, then bury her. She died shortly after he performed a bedside family Mass. The day I meet him in Hartford is the day after his mother's funeral.

I first communicated with Father Rick over a year ago, itching for an excuse to profile him. It was a fight. Frechette is averse to publicity and would prefer to be left in peace to carry on his work. He seems happy when I joke that I'll just call him "Father Bob" throughout this story. "Could you?" he honestly inquires.

From Hartford, we hit Newark for a lengthy layover and a connection to the Dominican Republic where a nine-hour bus ride to Port-au-Prince awaits us. (Only the military, humanitarian missions, and John Travolta, it seems, are being allowed to fly into the city airport.) By the time we reach Newark, Frechette is already frayed and distracted. With a ruddy tan, dressed in cargo pants and a North Face sweatshirt, he looks more like an athletic director at a good basketball college than a man of the collar. He prides himself on his unflappability but the tension is tugging at his face. Forever several hundred emails behind, Frechette's now about 900 in the hole. He wants to work at them during the layover and suggests I talk to the Haitians who accompanied him back home.

I ask them as a group, "Who wants to eat?" One of them says, "I will." I mistake Yvon for the English-speaker of the bunch, but it quickly becomes apparent that "I will" is the extent of his bilingualism. We tuck into a Naugahyde booth at the Garden State Diner for 30 minutes of awkward smiles and French fries. Yvon grew up in Father Rick's orphanage, and his late father was a big *houngan* (voodoo priest). He's now Frechette's regular coffinmaker, but all of this I learn later, since we can't understand each other.

Built like an NFL strong safety, Yvon is eating on my tab, but he politely orders a meager appetizer basket of chicken fingers. He eats half of them, then carefully wraps up the other half in a napkin. He starts to jam them into his pocket before I stop him and fetch a doggy-bag. I don't need to speak Creole to understand what just happened. Yvon might be in the land of plenty, but he's headed to a place where the next meal is never assured. In a country where, pre-quake, millions of poverty-crushed Haitians resort to eating mud-cakes mixed with vegetable shortening, a half-basket of two-day-old chicken fingers can seem like a feast.

After lunch, I take a seat at the gate with the other Haitians, all of whom work for Father Rick. Among them is a

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Haitian-born American, who prefers I call him "Johnny B. Goode." He speaks perfect English, and translates, as undramatically as if he were relating a weather report, the horrors the rest have seen: the crumbling walls and lost relatives; the frantic digging of friends and family out from the rubble with forks and spoons; the sleeping in the road in shifts, one family member standing sentry against cars passing in the night.

Father Rick shows up at the gate shoveling down food-court Chinese, a last break from his rice-and-beans staple, which he sometimes varies with beans-and-rice. With 200 emails knocked out, he's returned to the land of the living, only to tell me, in steadily unaffected yet gregarious fashion, more about the land of the dead.

He describes the pauper's cemetery near the airport, where poor Haitians who can't afford a burial plot rent one for deceased loved ones for four or five months. Then the gravediggers come, take you out, burn whatever's left, and throw your bones against the wall, clearing space for the next tenant.

"There are voodoo rituals there all the time," Frechette says. "Candles in skulls. Prayers to make the dead go cause a ruckus. We send our spirits up. They send theirs' sideways to cause problems for others. We're the Ghost Busters, they're the Ghost Dispatchers." He once brought an Italian visitor to witness the ceremony, and she became so freaked out, he had to give her his cross. He constantly comforts people by giving them his crosses. He fingers the one dangling from his neck now, saying it's his 25th in six years. "I don't buy ones I like anymore because I'm not going to have them for long."

Father Rick's Haiti is a place where the dead literally stick to you. Sometimes, his boots even stink of them. Here, he shows me, popping one off. There's a faint whiff of his morgue travels and burials on his REI boot. "That's really tame," he says. "I washed these. They were so bad, I wouldn't even tie them, just tucked the laces in." When he has to take his shoes off at airport security, he says people wonder, "What's the matter with that guy's feet?"

He's been doing the morgue runs for 15 years, but has never gotten used to the smell. It makes him so sick, he brings along rum and cigarettes. "People ask me if I smoke," he says. "Only on Thursdays." The Haitians avail themselves of the goods, but for Frechette, they're not optional. Without the spirit's fumes and cigarette smoke chasing the smell of the dead out of his nostrils, he vomits, which his Haitian colleagues find amusing.

When he returned to Haiti right after the earthquake, there was an overflow crowd at the morgue, literally thousands of dead laid out in the street in front of it. "They were picking them up with backhoes and bucket-loaders, dumping them into trucks," says Frechette, adding that the machines crunched the bodies against the walls in order to be able to scoop them. "They were hanging out the sides like crabs in a bucket. Really, really terrible. It was so shocking, so disgusting, I yelled, 'Give me a cigarette!'"

Haitians fleeing the police who were threatening to shoot 'looters' in Port-au-Prince

THE WEEKLY STANDARD / MATT LABASH

His Haitian right-hand and all-around fixer, Raphael—whom Frechette regards as something close to a brother—couldn't find them. Frechette, now desperately gagging, was yelling, "Give me a f—ing cigarette!!!" A journalist, taking in the scene, sidled up to him. "I heard somebody say, 'I'm an ABC affiliate, and I'm wondering, are you Father Frechette?' I said, 'Do I look like a priest?' I wasn't going to be caught using foul language." By the time the cigarettes were found, he says, it was too late. "I was empty of everything."

Many of Frechette's tales of the dead have dark punchlines. They put me in mind of Graham Greene (who had a pass at Papa Doc Duvalier's Haiti, the "shabby land of terror," with his novel *The Comedians*). Greene noted "that there is a delicate line between tragedy and farce," and Frechette extracts plenty of farce from this tragic land, wearing it like a pair of floaties in a sea of roiling misery.

He knows it, too, and figures that second only to his

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faith in a God that orders the universe even amidst the apparent chaos, humor is his salvation. He tells me he read somewhere that a normal reaction to a normal thing is normal, and an abnormal reaction to an abnormal thing is normal. But a normal reaction to an abnormal thing is abnormal. Even so, there's a "hierarchy of maturity," he says. You can become a "psychological fetus," upon witnessing horrors like Haiti's, which makes you a burden to everybody, as the problem becomes comforting you. You can become angry, blaming everyone or everything. But the most productive abnormal reaction, he says, is to find laughter. He does that, he reasons, and it keeps him moving. And he always has to keep moving.

Father Rick working in the morgue

ANDRÉ LUCAT

When I ask him how he could head back into the jaws of Haiti just a day after burying his mom, he tells me of her death. She knew it was happening, and she had time to prepare, had the best care, had lived a full life, and died with her family surrounding her. When he asked his mother why she wasn't afraid, knowing she'd die, she told him that she "believes in God, and if she looks at the whole trajectory of her life, life has been very good, why start mistrusting it?" "I think the fuller your life is, the less death is a threat to you," says Father Rick. "Empty people are scared to death to die."

The end, he reminds me, comes for us all. "But for the difficult thing, the unavoidable thing, it all went right," he says. "So you have to be thankful. 'Cause it doesn't go right for most people on the planet. [The earthquake victims] didn't have four seconds warning, had buildings thrown on top of them, were dragged out crushed, lifted up by bucket-loaders and thrown into trucks. And buried anonymously while everybody near them is retching, including me. It's the wrong way. It's the *wrong* way," he repeats for emphasis. "So when all the unavoidable things in life go the right way, you should be grateful and see everybody's not so lucky. That should make you engage, to try and make it go right for as many people as you can, you know what I mean?"

We touch down in Santo Domingo, and I take in the Taco Maker fast food, the cerveza signs, and the Ford Sport truck raffle at the airport. The Dominican Republic has all the taken-for-granted decadences of civilization: people holding hands on leisurely strolls down beachfront promenades, bicycling ice cream vendors, sidewalk cafes. The place we're headed just a short while away has none. As a friend said to me before I left, "It's as though God bisected the island of Hispaniola, and said, 'This side gets the shortstops. This side gets the cholera.'"

With a group of doctors and missionaries headed for St. Damien Hospital, we board a bus that will drive us through the night into Port-au-Prince. Frechette rides shotgun, and I sit behind, coaxing stories out of him the whole night through. We get only brief fits of sleep and a few squirt breaks in the middle of the road.

Born in Connecticut to a father who was an engineer for Royal Typewriter, Frechette took a job after seminary in a Baltimore parish, where he did children's Masses. Inheriting a modest animal act from the priest who preceded him, he strove to make it bigger and better, bringing in a

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live donkey for the nativity scene. He had to diaper it, after being told that if the donkey fouled the sanctuary, "I'd be transferred very fast."

His great-uncle, a vaudevillian, helped him train animals to expand the repertoire. "I kept working on this dog/bird act," says Frechette. "The dog was really well-trained. He brought announcements in his mouth at the end of Mass. But when he incorporated the Dalmatian and a white dove into an illustration of Noah's ark, things went terribly wrong. The dove was supposed to fetch an olive branch. But when the dove came back and landed on the dog's head with it, "he was eaten." The crowd spooked the dog, Father Rick figures. It worked much better in rehearsal.

From Baltimore, Frechette went to Mexico to learn Spanish, so he could work with refugees in New York. There, he met the man who would change his life's course from being a simple parish priest: the late Father William Wasson, who founded Nuestros Pequenos Hermanos (NPH) and ran a huge orphanage in Mexico.

Frechette first tried working with NPH in Honduras in the mid 1980s. But he wasn't terribly enamored of the country's political crosscurrents and felt he was getting pulled into things that were none of his business. "I had no idea about all these revolutions. The people would tell me priests and nuns were fighting with them with guns. It was a whole new world for me, I didn't understand any of it." Drawn to Haiti, Frechette was told by Wasson that if he was willing to go by himself and stay there, he was free to expand NPH.

"Being from Connecticut," says Frechette, "Mexico was quite a shock. But Haiti was beyond words. The dire poverty. The filth. The chaos. Everything—it was a disaster." Without knowing a soul, or even the language (he's now fluent in both Creole and French, along with six other languages), Frechette planted his flag, started the orphanage, and buckled his seatbelt to hurtle full-tilt through 22 years of miracles and madness, which in Haiti, are often indistinguishable.

There was the flood which destroyed the town of Gonaives in 2004. During it, a drowning mother put her baby in a basket before washing away. He was found alive, and given to Frechette's orphanage. They named him—what else?—Moses. But most of his stories come with less joyous endings. Many of them are touched upon in a slim, newly published collection of Frechette's writings, the title of which belies the brutality and violence of the place he lives: *Haiti: The God of Tough Places, The Lord of Burnt Men.*

No one should think Haiti was done in by the earthquake. It's a disaster of great magnitude, to be sure, but just the latest one. "*You* see it during a disaster," says Frechette. "But it's *always* a disaster." It's a place where the unemployment rate hovers around 80 percent, and over half the population lives on less than a dollar a day. It's a place where mothers think that landing their child in an orphanage—where it'll have shelter and three squares each day—is the equivalent of getting a scholarship to Groton. They will often come visit on family days, pretending they're the children's aunts.

It's a place that, no matter which local or neocolonial interest gets its proxy seated in power, remains rampant with instability, violence, next-to-no public services and systemic political corruption. Graham Greene called Haiti "the nightmare republic," and it's seen 32 coups in a 200-year-history. Old Haiti hands don't ask the question, "Where did it go wrong?" But rather, "When did it ever go right?"

No one should think Haiti was done in by the earthquake. It's just the latest disaster. 'You see it during a disaster,' says Frechette. 'But it's always a disaster.'

Frechette can recount unspeakable atrocities. He has seen bodies being eaten by pigs in the middle of the street. He has seen a man roll around his half-dead wife all day in a wheelbarrow, after she'd been shot in the head, looking in vain for medical help. He has seen a severed head stuck on a post outside a nunnery, for no apparent reason. He has been shaken down to recover the remains of murder victims. He has seen his customs broker shot in the jaw. He knew a mother who took her epileptic son to a *houngan*, who poured lye on the boy's head in an attempt to exorcise the evil spirit. The boy, whose burned skin turned him into an unrecognizable monster, seethed with hatred for the woman who only wanted to help him, until he went crazy and died.

Then there are the kidnappings—a robust industry in a country without many. One of Father Rick's many sidelines is playing hostage negotiator. It's a trade that chose him, not the other way around. Frechette's missions provide all manner of services to Port-au-Prince's sprawling Cité Soleil slum, which seems to have been named ironically as it is one of the darkest places on earth. About 20 minutes away from St. Damien, it is considered by some to be the most dangerous place in the world. Known for its grinding poverty and hair-trigger violence, it's a place which U.N. troops go years at a time without entering.

But it's also a place where Father Rick enjoys a fair amount of popularity, supplying the locals with everything from movie nights to rice and drinking water. He's welcomed there like a hometown hero. Motorcycles ride along-

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side his tap-tap (the brightly painted, covered pickup trucks used as taxis and shuttles, where you tap on the side to have a driver let you off), with well-wishers calling "*Mon père!*" He is one of the few outsiders in good standing among the competing gang leaders who run the place. While I'm with him, one who escaped from the prison thanks to damage during the earthquake calls Frechette's cell phone to offer condolences on the death of his mother.

With such good relations, Frechette will often get the call to go in and negotiate when someone like a foreign priest gets kidnapped—which happens with some regularity. At any time of the day or night, he might go nose-to-nose with gang leaders and the gun-toting child soldiers who do their dirty work. Not a macho type prone to losing his temper, he will nevertheless bark demands—"show teeth," as he calls it—because they'll cannibalize you if you display weakness.

An open sewer running through Cité Soleil

THE WEEKLY STANDARD / MATT LABASH

But even his kidnapping stories come with built-in punch lines. There was the time he himself was almost kidnapped. He, Raphael, and an Italian doctor were driving home in their truck, when two kidnappers jumped out of nowhere with guns drawn. "I said, 'Oh s—!' The Italian doctor said, 'What? You're supposed to say Mother of God.' 'Yes. That's next.' First the human reaction, then the divine interpolation."

The kidnappers were horrified when they realized they'd mistakenly tried to nab Father Rick. They begged him not to tell their leader, who Frechette says was regarded "as a Caligula," one of the most ruthless gang leaders in Cité Soleil. Evans, as he was known, would've almost certainly killed them. They explained they only did this because they were hungry and wanted something to eat, asking him if he could spare a few bucks. "I said, 'You've gotta be kidding! You scared the bejeezus out of us, and you want us to buy you lunch?'" He refused.

But the very next day, word spread that a young Czech priest had been kidnapped along with his truck. Father Rick went back to his assailants, apologized for losing his temper, and bought them rice-and-beans and beer. Then he blackmailed them. He told them he wouldn't tell Evans of their mistake. "But you're going to do me a favor, and I don't care how you do it." His deal: Evans had kidnapped his colleague, Father Roman, and in exchange for not telling Evans, they were going to do whatever it took to find the Czech priest and get him freed.

It turns out, Evans had decided Father Roman was worth $30,000, and if someone didn't pay it, he would cut off his head. But, by the next morning, with Father Rick's inquiries and efforts, Evans cut him loose for pennies on the dollar (he'd have probably turned him loose for free, Frechette says, but even kidnappers have some overhead—the safe house, the gunmen, etc.—and "people have to eat"). Evans gave back the truck, too. Father Rick makes sure to pay the ransom surcharges out of his own pocket, not asking family members for the usual $1,500 or so, so nobody can accuse him of being in cahoots and splitting money with the kidnappers.

Another time, he got the call to negotiate the release of a Salvadoran priest named Father Cesar, who'd been kidnapped. It was after dark, and, nervous about dealing with kidnappers he didn't know, he convinced one of Cité Soleil's gang leaders, Ti Blanc, to go with him. Acting on short notice, Frechette didn't know the way, didn't have any diesel in his truck, and didn't have any ransom money. By the time the night was over, a muttering Ti Blanc had given him a lift, lent him gas, and fronted him the ransom.

But Frechette's life isn't all smiles and Keystone Kidnappers. One afternoon, he says, he was going to visit some nuns. On his way there, he saw a teenaged boy burning in the street. A group of thugs had set him on fire. He was already dead, and Frechette could

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do nothing for him, but he drove ahead and asked the nuns for five buckets of water. He went back to the scene, hauling eight of the sisters with him. They got out of the truck, took the buckets, and extinguished the flames consuming the boy's body.

"I can still hear it. I can still smell it," Frechette says. "The sizzle like frying steak."

"Then we put him in the back of the truck, and do what we always do. Have a prayer right there. To make a counter-witness by our own behavior. The gang that set him on fire stood there and watched as we did these things." His missions' role, whether through doctoring or teaching, bringing food or burying the dead, Frechette has written, is to help "repair the damage done . . . to make grace present, concretely, in our world."

Later, the mother superior called Frechette telling him a trembling, crying woman came to the sisters and asked for her. When she came outside, the woman fell to her knees and kissed her hands. The mother superior didn't understand. It was the mother of the boy who'd been burned. Someone had run to tell her, "They're killing your son and setting him on fire." She raced out of her shack, and when she was within view of her son, was so horrified, that her legs froze. She couldn't move them, neither to run toward him, nor to run away. "She was frozen in hell," Frechette puts it.

She told the mother superior that she saw a truck go by, and then slow down, and then keep going. Then she saw it come back. And the people in it got out, and "put out my son like I was wishing I could put out the fire on my son's body." Then they picked him up until he was clean. Then they prayed for him. "Everything she tried to do was done in front of her, by absolute strangers who didn't know her or her kid."

Of all the emotions the woman was entitled to, he wouldn't guess gratitude would be high on the list. And yet there she was. "It made her able to live with it," Frechette thinks. "It's like God sent someone to help her, like it restored her faith in humanity again. . . . I call it the countersign. The terrible thing that's in front of you, you hurry, and offset it right away. Before what happens is too taxing and too poisonous. . . . Sometimes with horrible things, you really feel there is nothing you can do. Nothing. You're just useless. But over time, you start seeing that to do the right thing no matter what has tremendous power."

Father Rick enjoys a fair amount of popularity in Cité Soleil, supplying the locals with everything from movie nights to rice and water. He's welcomed like a hometown hero.

By morning, we've reached the large St. Damien complex in Tabarre. The earthquake has taken its toll here, just as it has everywhere else. Two of the compound's four security walls have collapsed. The chapel, where Frechette conducts Mass every morning at 7 A.M. (before inviting attendees to follow him to a room at the hospital where he blesses the hospital dead from the night before) is missing stained glass and stonework. Sunlight hits the altar through a punched-out oval window that three angels on a ceiling fresco look down upon, as though dismayed.

Though a well-line was ruptured, leaving it waterless at first, the hospital is in pretty good shape. (The walls, though, bear magic-marker hashmarks across their cracks. If aftershocks cause them to shift, it's a sign the building could fall.) There are scores of patients in tents and cots out on the lawn, as the 150-bed pediatric hospital is grossly overfilled with adults as well as children, since most of the local hospitals were destroyed. Many of the patients have been afraid to sleep indoors since the earthquake, anyway.

Frechette steps off the bus and is plunged back into his dizzying world. From staffing shortages (roughly 30 percent of his Haitian staffers haven't returned or are unaccounted for) to where to put post-op patients to how to bargain for rice with the inflationary prices, he cannot walk ten paces down a hallway without being besieged by five new supplicants asking what should be done. He takes it all in stride, with a bemused smirk and crisp, clean, assured answers. He works long into the night. His dinner might consist of dipping crackers into a jar of peanut butter, maybe even while nipping at an end-of-the-day Prestige beer in his "office," a table which four or so others are sharing at any given moment. It is exhausting to watch him work.

People tell me that while the quake has made things worse, this is pretty much Frechette's life as usual. Robin Schwartz, who works at St. Damien, says he jokes that he's "a priest who lives in the maintenance closet of a children's hospital." It's not really a joke. He lives in a single second-floor room, which at the moment is packed with visitors' suitcases. By these standards, negotiating hostage-releases may seem like a reprieve.

As Frechette is continually slammed with administrative duties, I spend a fair amount of time traversing his hospital, making the acquaintance of doctors and patients. Two of my favorites are my roommates from Scranton, Penn., Peter Cognetti and Scot McKenna, a family practitioner and plas-

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tic surgeon, respectively. In the no-frills bunkhouse behind the hospital, we sleep three to a room, a humid mosquito-ridden box with a sink that doesn't work and a curtainless cold-water shower that is barely functional—though enough so that it is used by seven or eight other doctors who are sleeping on the breezier roof and have no bathroom at all. It's, of course, vastly preferable to the digs of the million or so newly homeless in Port-au-Prince sleeping under squares of plastic in public parks. Nobody is complaining.

Like many of the volunteer doctors who swarmed St. Damien from as far away as Italy and Slovakia, Cognetti and McKenna arrived on their own dime with two big duffels and are returning to the States with nothing but what they're wearing, leaving the rest, even their clothing, for needy Haitians. Cognetti also runs a personal philanthropic program. Before he left Scranton, friends and colleagues gave him piles of twenties, telling him to not to give the money to any organization, but to distribute it directly to Haitians.

Cognetti is like Sinatra at the Sands among the orderlies and patients. If you do anything for him—get him a Coke, hold the door open, turn on a light—you get a 20 dollar tip. His largesse gets us a much-needed fan, gets our shower nearly fixed, gets us cots. "What should I try for next?" he says, with mock greed. "Pay-per-view? A cash bar? Sean Penn's gonna wanna stay here. Michelin will have to give us stars."

The dogs are feeding in the cathedral alright, on cadavers trapped beneath a collapsed wall—two, maybe three as someone spots an extra arm.

Fraternizing with the docs, I hear about the horrors the earthquake wrought. In the early days, it was utter pandemonium—everybody out on the lawn, IV-bags hanging from trees, wounded getting carried in on planks of plywood, some so badly injured that their limbs would fall off when you'd lift them. With medical supplies short, stoic Haitians endured painful procedures on nothing stronger than Tylenol. The hospital was so short-staffed before international help started surging in that the Italian coordinator of surgery and the anesthesiologist would cover rounds *during* surgery.

All manner of improvised medical implements were used. Procedures were being done with un-sterilized power drills. Amputations were done with jiggly saws, which look like a piece of piano-wire with teeth. And there were *a lot* of amputations. Orthopedic surgeons were sawing limbs off some nights until 3 A.M.—an estimated 70 percent of surgical procedures were the removal of arms or legs. When I visit a post-op pediatric ward upstairs, six of the seven children I count are amputees, some of them double.

While it's calmed down, the picture is grim. One of McKenna's patients sits on a gurney, a young girl in a pretty Sunday dress, who calmly plays with her mother's fingers. She looks totally normal, except for the huge flap of skin peeled off her forehead down to her skull. Nearly two weeks after the earthquake, a baby with severe burns on all four limbs, screams like she is on fire as her bandages are removed and her wounds cleaned. She's been kicked to three hospitals and has only been given Ibuprofen for the pain. She repeatedly calls "mama, mama," but only her father is there. She is so upset, she begins vomiting. With no nurse near and nothing to wipe up a mess with, the befuddled father simply cups his hands in front of her, letting his terrified daughter heave into them.

Everywhere you turn, it seems, there's a new horror: the toddler found alive holding the hand of his mother, who lay dead beneath the rubble he was sitting on. The amputee mother I meet in the mini-tent city on the hospital grounds, whose young daughter cleans her wounds as though she is the mother now. The mother smiles and kisses me like I'm an old friend, though she doesn't have much to smile about. In addition to losing her arm, two of her children were killed.

On the roof of the guesthouse at night, under a starry panorama, the doctors and nurses and humanitarian soldiers of fortune who populate such scenes (aid-organization do-gooders who've had their tickets punched in all the dung-heaps of the world) find solace in their cups, trying to make sense of what they're seeing. They get serious. What's going to happen when the rainy season comes—and it's coming soon. Water will swirl all around the tent cities, where people are defecating on the ground. Many of my battled-hardened drinking companions predict that without proper sanitation, immunizations, and shelter, the disease outbreaks could make the earthquake look like child's play.

A feisty Canadian nurse named Anne-Marie Gleeson tells me of pulling tent-city medical duty, where lines form around the block, patients lying about long-standing ailments, afraid that if they don't make their troubles about the earthquake, they won't get treated. "They're in deep s—," she says. "Figuratively and literally. I'm giving them 16 days of hypertension meds. But the rainy season is going to come and wash these people down a f—ing hill. High blood pressure will be the least of their concerns. They'll be drowning in mud and fecal matter. I'd like to think I make some kind of difference, but Jeez Louise. I can fix a broken leg. You have pus in your ear? I can fix that. But I don't know how to fix a country."

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I meet a tent city habitué named Marc Andy Denard. A 33-year-old Haitian, he is trying to tend to his mother, who has a shattered femur. He begs me to take him to America, as though it is as simple as sticking him in my carry-on. He tells me he wants to be a refugee. Him, and several million others. It's not going to happen, of course, but he's so hopeful (and he has an aunt in the United States), that I agree to walk him to the U.S. embassy about a half a mile away, to see if anything can be done. We get there, and the Haitian guards won't even let us in. Why would they? They have jobs and uniforms and a place to sleep at night (presumably). I'm told all inquiries will have to be made by phone, and nobody's phone is working.

On the walk back, Marc tells me he's afraid to stay in Haiti. "Here, the ground is very quick" he says, with a hunted gaze, "I don't trust it. It feels it's always trembling. I don't know. It might be me. I have nowhere to go. Nowhere to live. My mother has feet break. Praise God for sending you to me. I'm sure if I'm with you, I become refugee." I try to explain to him that it won't happen. I don't want him to harbor false hope. But he won't listen.

Every time I see him subsequently, he's wearing a blue blazer in the sweltering heat, which makes him sweat profusely. But he wants to look sharp in case he gets a refugee-status hearing. He seems to write all day. In the chill of the early morning, as I drop off food at his tent, he shakes off the cold with bleary eyes, wrapped in a blanket, and hands me pages, titled "News For The Media Of Matt Labech." His written English is better than his spoken. He tells eyewitness tales of death and valor and fear. He uses, or misuses, words like "redoubtable." He's trying hard. As though if he writes well enough, someone will let him into America. I read his letters in front of him, clapping his back and telling him he'd make a fine journalist. He smiles sheepishly.

Life is no less dramatic outside St. Damien's walls. One night, we find ourselves in front of the ruined cathedral, where Frechette's friend Joseph Serge Miot, the archbishop of Port-au-Prince, used to preside. Miot was killed during the quake, thrown from his balcony and crushed. On January 6, Frechette says, Miot had asked him to call when his mother died. Miot wanted to travel to Hartford and perform the funeral. "He was dead before she was."

As Frechette offers blessings and prayers for the archbishop and the others who died, two Italian journalists notice some dogs busy around a hole in the wall of the cathedral. They look as though they're feeding, an odd sight in Haiti, since all the dogs here look like ribcages on sticks. We move to check it out. The dogs are feeding alright, on cadavers trapped beneath a collapsed wall—two, maybe three as someone spots an extra arm. The dogs have already eaten them down to their skulls, mats of hair collected on the ground in front of them. Father Rick shoos the dogs away, calls for the truck lights, and asks, "Does anyone have a cigarette?" He says a few extra prayers he hadn't been counting on.

Jean Yves Rait at his collapsed house in Cité Soleil

THE WEEKLY STANDARD / MATT LABASH

On another afternoon, I tag along as Frechette and a small group of doctors take the St. Damien tap-tap over to the slums of Cité Soleil to check on two of his street schools. The poverty almost hurts your eyes. Women wash themselves in water collected in potholes. Small children walk around naked. Buildings are pocked with bullet holes.

"Oh look, a chicken!" says a doctor from Slovakia.

"That's a fighting cock," says Father Rick, without batting an eye.

On the way there, Frechette regales us with kidnapping tales, like that of the elderly priest he freed, who didn't take kindly to being grabbed. He scratched and bit his kidnappers and howled like a werewolf. When Father Rick came to pick him up, he was a mess. Frechette was outraged. "I said to the kidnappers, 'You should be ashamed of yourselves. Look at him. He's covered in blood.' They said, 'You think that's his blood? That's *our* blood!'"

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But when we disembark, he is off like a shot, 30 paces ahead. Not only is he always a man in a hurry, but he wants as many people as possible to see him with the newcomers, so that they put together that the doctors and construction-types coming in over the next few days are with him. It's an insurance-policy, he tells me.

Frechette is surrounded by neighborhood children. As I walk a fair distance behind him next to an open sewer, a 30-year-old Haitian man who speaks fair English grabs me. He wants to show me his ruined house, which is located down one of the tunnel-like alleyways of corrugated-tin-and-cardboard shacks that run like habi-trails throughout Cité Soleil. I catch the priest's eye and motion that I'm making a detour. He nods, distracted. He doesn't have time to babysit.

The Haitian's name is Jean Yves Raitt. He has a wife and a 3-year-old son. The boy is naked from the waist down. "My house went down," says Jean. "I have no shelter now. Livin' in the street." He shows me what was his place, all crumbled cinder. Now all he has is a tarp flap and a rug, his family sleeping next to the open sewer. As I take pictures of him and his boy in the ruins of their house, two other severe-looking Haitians come upon our scene in the back alley and start jabbering in Creole. My trouble-radar blips. With over 4,000 criminals on the loose from the destroyed jail, many of them from this neighborhood, kidnappings are booming. A foreigner got swiped just this morning.

I pretend to listen to Jean, but I'm actually intent on the Creole-speaking Haitians. I can't understand a word, except one, which I hear clear as day—"kidnap." I have no idea what context they're using it in, or if it applies to me, or if there's a Creole word that sounds exactly like it and means something totally different. But I don't want to find out. "Say, Jean," I suggest, "Let's walk and talk." I want to get back to my insurance policy, Father Rick. Jean, sensing my unease, says firmly, "I will walk you out of here."

As we do, the other Haitians follow close behind. I turn around and address them, even though they don't understand me. Their countenances seem to soften. Jean walks me back to the main stem. But Father Rick is gone. He's hopped a motorcycle taxi back to the hospital, leaving us with Raphael and the tap-tap, both of which are about a half a mile up the road. I make the long walk to the truck, collecting more and more Haitian men along the way, about 20 in all. But there is no trouble, they just listen to Jean tell me his woes.

He's a tap-tap artist, painting them for money. But now, that's dried up, and he has nothing. When I ask him what he eats, he laughs. "*Eat*?" like that's a luxury he's forgotten about. He drinks two small packets of water a day. His baby is getting dehydrated. Two weeks after the earthquake, no aid has come. I want to help the guy. Since I can't secure my belongings back at St. Damien, I carry all my cash in my cargo-pants pocket. But I know that in this crowd, with my ride halfway down the road, if I peel off 20 or 40 bucks, I'm going to have to keep peeling until it's all gone. So I don't.

I point to a sidewalk market right across the street, where some produce is for sale. I ask him why he doesn't steal out of necessity. He shakes his head disapprovingly: "That's not my way. That's not *my* way. I'm praying for the help. And any help not coming. I don't know what I'm gonna do. I want my country changing. I don't have anything to give my wife, anything to save my life. Everything is broken."

I watch the little ones go—a small girl laid on a longer girl's legs, and then another added, and then another—and they all fit into a coffin no wider than a foot.

Whenever Father Rick can shake the shackles of administrating, we shoot all over the city. By day, we take motorcycle taxis, Frechette's preferred mode of transportation, as it's faster in the punishing traffic, and feels freer—something one suspects with all his responsibilities he doesn't get to feel often enough. It also gets the blood going. During a long motorcycle trip one afternoon, my driver and I almost get dislodged by a guy swinging a long piece of lumber, by a protruding tap-tap side-mirror, and by a mob of 100 or so Haitians running directly at us, afraid cops were about to shoot them as they looted. (Though "looting" is a strong word for standing over crushed buildings, breaking concrete apart with pipes, hoping you can find a little scrap rebar to sell or prop up your tent.)

Sitting on the back of a tap-tap, watching the city go by at night, is even eerier. With the dark cloaking any color that would stop your eye, you simply see the creepy contours of destruction. Block after block after block of ruin. Collapsed second floors smother first floors like cheese on a lopsided tuna melt. The air has a constant acridity.

I ask Frechette if I'm smelling remains.

"Nahhhh," he laughs. "It usually smells that way. The sweet smell of old piss!"

It does smell like stale urine, he's right. But also of dust and crumbled concrete ash and fire, as people burn trash in the street—not in receptacles. There don't seem

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One of Father Rick's volunteers pauses during the gathering up of children's bodies in the Port-au-Prince morgue.

ANDRÉ LUCAT

to be any. Instead the street is one giant ashcan, and everything in it seems to be considered kindling.

Half-wrecked buildings tilt at odd angles, looking ready to fall from the push of a hand. Though there are no streetlights, no light at all except for those of passing cars, everyone is out on the streets. They are jam-packed. Like a giant block party without the party. People sit defeated on coolers. Men push wheelbarrows full of sticks. Squatters sprawl in abandoned intersections as if sitting on park benches. Pedestrians walk and walk and walk in the pitch dark, with no apparent destination. Trying to go somewhere. Trying to pretend there's anywhere to go.

Families bed down for the night in the street with cinder block barriers that they hope signal cars not to run over them. Some seek extra protection setting up between two cars, as if they're parallel parking their children for the evening. There are no beggars. What would be the point? Nobody has anything to beg for. Even though I saw the pictures before arriving, even though I've been to other third-world cesspools and New Orleans after Katrina and even the east side of Detroit, I have no frame of reference for what I'm witnessing. The best I can come up with is Cormac McCarthy, who unwittingly offered a dead-on description of this scene in his novel *The Road*:

> Wearing masks and goggles, sitting in their rags by the side of the road like ruined aviators. Their barrows heaped with shoddy. Towing wagons or carts. Their eyes bright in their skulls. Creedless shells of men tottering down the causeways like migrants in a feverland. The frailty of everything revealed at last.

The only difference being McCarthy had to imagine his post-apocalyptic world. In Port-au-Prince right now, he wouldn't have to imagine a thing.

My tour of hell continues one afternoon, when several of us take motorcycle taxis out to the fields of Titanyen. Father Rick needs to check on his gravediggers' progress for burials the following day and also wants to see about the rumor that bodies are getting dumped.

We head out of the city toward the low-slung mountains, then shoot up the coastal highway. The sun scorches us, as we look off to the west, the blue-green Caribbean shimmying with blithe indifference toward the wrecked country that its surf crashes upon. When we get to Titanyen, we have to get off the motorcycles and walk them over a huge dirt berm, seemingly erected overnight. Frechette suspects someone wants to keep people out. Back on, getting caked with dust as we bump up and down the gulch-riddled dirt roads, the hills are literally on fire—lit-

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tle brushfires all over the place. I tuck my head behind my driver's shoulder, trying not to catch flying embers in my hair. At first, I think it's some kind of controlled burn. Then I remember I'm in Haiti. Nothing's ever under control here.

As we near Frechette's graveyard, the rumors prove true. There's a stack of half-plowed earth, atop which lie 30 or so naked bodies, as if a bulldozer driver started to bury them, went on a smoke break, then forgot to come back. Arms and legs jut from the half-dug earth, like some sort of Goya-esque horror, while the bodies on top of the pile are so sun-baked, their skin looks like plum pits. The maggots are feasting.

The 'Grateful Dead' playing at the Titanyen funeral

For a while, we wordlessly survey the disgrace. Then Father Rick looks up to the burning hills. "Just like hell. Isn't it?" he says. "It always amazes me how nature aligns." The state has been doing mass burials here since the earthquake. But even before, Frechette explains, "This whole area was known as the place of the dead. For 40 years, since the time of Papa Doc, it's the place where they dumped the dead. It's notorious for executions, for emptying the prisons out by bringing them all here, digging a hole, having them stand at the edge, plugging them in the head, then letting them fall right into the grave. We use the same areas to bury the dead in the right way."

A little ways down the road, sweat-drenched men with pick-axes and shovels stand in huge holes, readying them for tomorrow's burial. Cows graze in a field of white wooden crosses. Frechette's had to stop using them, however, since people would steal the crosses to cook with. He's now switched to smaller crosses made of fish-tins, hiring crossmakers from Cité Soleil. Though even that is getting too expensive with all the newly dead.

Our motorcyclists nervously call for us to leave, before the flames jump the road, and we have to ride out through a tunnel of fire. On the way back up the hill, I step in a sinkhole on a grave, and nearly go down. Father Rick laughs. He says it's seven years bad luck to step on the dead, seven years good luck to bury them. "I could have a square-dance here," he says, "and mathematically, I'd still be ahead of the game."

Then his smile fades, and he looks puzzled. "We've buried over 10,000 people here. I don't think I know the name of even one."

The next morning brings the grimmest business of all, pulling bodies out of the morgue. A Haitian morgue is not a morgue as we understand one. There's no embalming. No stainless steel drawers. No clean white sheets. No air-conditioning. Instead, the dead are thrown into heaps in spottily-refrigerated rooms (the generator kicks off even while we're there, and when it stays off, Frechette says there are maggots up to his ankles). The walls are chipped. The ceiling tiles peel from water damage. The cement beneath our feet is grimy with dirt and dried blood and looks like a slaughterhouse floor. However the dead come in is how they stay—gashed and cut, shot and crushed, disrobed and bloody and bloated. Most people don't know their dead are here, and never will. Even if they did, it's hard to imagine recovering your loved one under such conditions, getting a morgue worker to let you in with a flashlight, kicking other bodies over, hoping to find your daughter or son or wife.

Father Rick, in cargo pants and Jesus-sandals, heads in with his 20 or so Haitian volunteers in protective plastic suits. They have come fully armed with seven trucks. They have only 20 cardboard coffins (there's a shortage) but clean white canvas body bags that look like funeral palls will work for the other 150 or so. To kill the smell, they also bring Marlboro Reds and two bottles of three-star Barbancourt rum. "Three stars for funerals, five stars for weddings," Frechette cracks.

They take their places in the morgue's dark narrow corridor, a bucket brigade for the dead: lifting them, lowering them, sliding them, and then relifting them into

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the trucks outside. A couple Haitians pull the dead out of the cooler. The rest slap a coffin or body bag down, throw rosaries in, and place in them a white paper sheet, like those that come with your dry cleaning, which have imprinted on them "*In paradisum deducant te angeli*": "May the angels lead you into paradise."

Father Rick stands right next to the cooler, saying blessings. So as not to start vomiting, he smokes cigarettes like he's trying to break his lungs, sometimes lighting up another while the first is still burning. He holds a roll of paper, the kind doctors place on their examination tables. And he rips sheets off with mechanical regularity, handing them to the Haitians after each of the dead they lift. After years of experience, they've learned that if you wipe your surgical gloves after each lift with the paper, the gloves last longer.

I stand beside Frechette, watching the dead get dropped into their body bags, sometimes hearing the thud of a skull on the floor. With so many people to move, the Haitians work fast. As they slide right past my feet, I clinically document all the variations: the contusions, the lacerations, the bloating, the exposed bones, the emaciation, the heads sitting on their necks at angles that necks don't permit. I see just about everything, except gray hair. Not a one has gray hair.

As I watch this, I carry on conversations with Frechette and others. It's a horror, to be sure. But it's like I'm watching a movie. Taking Frechette's abnormal-situation lesson to heart, I look for normalcy. I admire the perfect smokerings blown by Johnny B. Goode. I elbow Frechette when I spy one of the volunteers who is wearing an orange prison jumpsuit. On the back of it, in English, reads "Department of Erections."

The dead just keep coming, and they come out gleamingly slick, like rotten vegetables left too long in a refrigerator drawer. Some of them are so drippy that the Haitians have to double bodybag them, as your cashier would leaky ground beef at the grocery store. I think it odd that I'm getting through this without feeling much of anything beyond sympathy.

But that's when the kids start coming out.

They've saved the coffins for the kids since, depending on their size, you can fit five or six in one (a harsh necessity). I am still clinically documenting, but the things that didn't bother me much before, all of a sudden do. My eyes start burning. I feel like I'm growing a goiter in the back of my throat. I hadn't bothered with a mask or smokes,

Bodies are laid into the mass grave at Titanyen.

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but the smell becomes excruciating, like that of a curdled-dairy factory. I ask Raphael for a hit of rum. He holds it two inches above my mouth and pours. I'm grateful for the stinging in my throat. I take the excess runoff, and rub it under my nose.

I watch the little ones go—a small girl laid on a longer girl's legs, and then another added, and then another—and they all fit into a coffin no wider than a foot. As I take this in, Esther, the young Haitian woman beside me who is throwing string rosaries into the coffins, begins singing, temporarily hushing the Haitian men, who were feverishly barking orders at each other. It's a clear, soulful Creole lamentation. As I watch the stacked babies slide past my boots, I hold onto her voice like a life raft. It's the saddest song I've ever heard.

With the trucks loaded, we head back to Titanyen, the Fields of Less Than Nothing. The fires are out, but other journalists have discovered the place. Photographers take pictures around yesterday's stack of unburied bodies. About six gigantic pits have been dug to unload the dead into. When our trucks arrive at the graves, Father Rick is bothered by all the extra cameras. "This turns it into something else," he says.

He must proceed anyway, throwing white vestments over his dirty cargo pants. The brass band, The Grateful Dead, are posted graveside, looking rather ungrateful. We're three hours late, and they've been standing in their black suits in the hot sun in these arid scrublands. But they strike it up anyway, playing "I'll Fly Away" and "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Even in his priestly garb, Frechette assists the Haitians in carrying the coffins and body bags to their graves. He doesn't believe in asking people to do anything that he won't do himself. I watch Raphael and Fred descend into the pits, to receive the dead, and align them. Fred is a gravedigger and an ex-con who grew up in Frechette's orphanage.

Several nights earlier, we all went to Harry's Bar, after Frechette had visited his old wrecked hospital, where a young woman and a volunteer's visiting brother had died. "I could use a gin and tonic," he said. Once at the bar, Frechette fell into conversation with another missionary, trading dengue fever and malaria stories. "This is what happens when missionaries drink," he warned.

But with Johnny B. Goode translating, Fred told me a story of his own. A few years ago, he was to bury a little girl, and her mom was riding to the cemetery with him. When they got there, a Cité Soleil gang greeted him with guns, kicked the mother out of the truck, firing shots over her head to make her run off like a scared rabbit. They kidnapped him, but when they brought him back to headquarters, they realized they'd just kidnapped a dead girl as well—they hadn't noticed the coffin in the flatbed. Not an ideal ransom scenario.

So they kept his truck and turned Fred loose, telling him to take the dead girl with him. Which he did. He threw the little girl's undersized coffin on his back, and avoiding a well-known vigilante cop whose car he saw, carried her all the way back to the cemetery. I asked him why on earth he didn't just leave it and run. He said he couldn't, he owed it to the mother.

Father Rick, hearing the story, broke in, saying that afterwards, he found Fred in the crushed hospital that we had just visited. He was sobbing like a baby. "I couldn't stop him," says Frechette. "I said, 'What's wrong?' Fred said, 'The thing that bothers me most is that the mother doesn't know that I fulfilled my pledge to her, and that I buried her child tenderly.' He knew her love for the kid, and he had to carry her love for her. And he did it. You see why I do these things? In the most horrible situation, an ex-con kidnapped by the most brutal of thieves, stealing a corpse and chasing the mother off with guns. . . . Do you see the goodness that came out of it? It's unbelievable, isn't it? It's unbelievable."

There are no mothers graveside today. These are the nameless dead.

Haiti might be the only place where death with dignity entails being buried five-to-a-cardboard coffin. But it is moving and beautiful. Yet, I suggest to Frechette, it seems futile. Why do this? However horrible their lives were, this isn't going to change that. Why spend so much time and energy serving people who'll never know they've been served?

Frechette thinks about it a long while, then says, "If the dead are garbage, then the living are walking garbage."

I watch Raphael and Fred working down in the pits. In the heat, they look like they've gone for a swim. Their close-cropped hair turns chalky white from the loose dirt falling in around them. They come out of the pits, which are so deep, they need running starts up the sides, and then have to grab someone's hand above ground to pull them all the way out. Father Rick, his vestments stained with dirt and sweat, takes a spot above the body bags and cardboard coffins. There, he offers the last words these forgotten souls will ever have spoken to them:

> The evening has come. The busy world is hushed. The fever of life is over. And your work on earth is left undone. In His great mercy, may God give you a safe lodging, a holy rest, and peace at last. May their souls and the souls of all the faithful, departed to the mercy of God, rest in peace. ♦

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'Rest in peace, Europe. Much love, Reagan.' The Hague, 1983

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Victory Lap

Final reflections on Communism's failure

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

The French philosopher and author Jean-François Revel, who died in 2006 at the age of 82, had strong feelings about Sincerity, Hunger for Justice, Hope, and Change. They were not, however, the usual feelings. "None of these vapid platitudes," he wrote, "excuses anything, especially not in the mouths of intellectuals."

This insight motivated his whole writing life. Revel joined the French Resistance as a teenager. He taught philosophy in Algeria, Mexico, and Italy; edited both of France's leading newsmagazines; and wrote books on Baudelaire, Proust, Descartes, Western philosophy, Buddhism, and French cuisine. He was elected to the Académie Française, the country's highest cultural honor.

For the whole of that varied career, though, anti-Communism was what motivated Revel most. He wanted to figure out how "noble intentions" flow into barbarous acts. Were the perpetrators of Communism cynical and cruel? Or idealistic and naïve? One mystery, in particular, preoccupied him in his final years: Why we understand Nazism as evil, but Communism as merely misguided, and even nobly misguided. Europe was obsessed with understanding and atoning for the Nazi Holocaust—and rightly, Revel felt. But Communism labored under no such moral stain, as if it were the beneficiary of some kind of (in Revel's words) "Most Favored Totalitarianism" clause. His thoughts on the subject make up the bulk of his final book, *Last Exit to Utopia*, which has just been translated into English a decade after its publication in France.

Last Exit to Utopia
The Survival of Socialism in a Post-Soviet Era
by Jean-François Revel
translated by Diarmid V.C. Cammell
Encounter, 300 pp., $23.95

Revel was a materialist. The Marxism that interested him was what Raymond Aron called "the Marxism of Marx." Revel felt, as Marx himself did, that you ought to judge social systems by their results, not by the sentimental bourgeois myths that get garlanded on them. Where he was bold was in his assertion that Communism itself had such bourgeois myths. Stripped of the rhetoric of "caring," Communism looks like a run-of-the-mill system for producing prison camps, censorship, and mass executions.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, everyone—Communists themselves very much included—would admit that certain Communist regimes had gone badly astray. But few intellectuals would entertain the possibility that the evils of Communism were systematic. A good gauge of the mood, Revel believes, came with the publication of two books in the mid-1990s.

Christopher Caldwell, a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author of* Reflections on the Revolution in Europe.

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The historian François Furet's amply documented account of Communism's grip on Western intellectuals, *The Passing of an Illusion* (1995), was well-received by France's largely left-leaning intelligentsia—it treated Communism as an intellectual error. Although Revel and Furet were friends, they differed on this point. Revel's views are closer to those in *The Black Book of Communism*, an equally well-documented account published by a committee of historians two years after Furet's. *The Black Book* treated Western intellectuals' infatuation with Communism over the decades not as a misunderstanding but as collaboration in a crime. That is one reason why the book was almost universally condemned by French reviewers upon publication. Two of its contributors, Revel writes, were compelled by the universities they worked for to renounce their contributions. But there is another reason for the differing reputation of the two books. Furet, a former Communist himself, was thought of as a "man of the left," plausibly or not.

"One of the symptoms of how intellectual debate has degenerated in France," Revel writes, "is that 'where you're coming from' (to use that horrible expression) counts for more than what you are actually saying."

Revel's book is an inventory of political correctness as it stood in France a decade or two ago. There are a couple of problems with bringing out such a book now. First, no matter how important and revelatory these episodes may have seemed back then, it looks like nitpicking to care overmuch today about, say, the reaction of various leftists to remarks Octavio Paz made about the Sandinistas during a speech in Frankfurt in 1987. A second problem, naturally enough, is that some of Revel's judgments have been falsified by time. When he wrote, it appeared obvious to everyone that China's combination of partially open markets and political authoritarianism was on the verge of collapsing of its own contradictions. But China's economic syncretism has, like capitalism before it, proved more flexible than its doomsayers suspected. Revel belittles the view of Lionel Jospin, France's prime minister at the turn of the century, that the 1998 ruble crisis in Russia was caused by "the abuse of ultraliberal [i.e., ultra-capitalist] 'gadgets.'" For Revel, the ruble collapse had everything to do with kleptocracy and nothing to do with international finance. With the wisdom of hindsight, we would probably say it had a bit to do with both. Financial gadgets have turned out to be more dangerous than we thought.

Revel shows that Communism introduces intellectual corruption in certain predictable ways. He seems keen to extend this point to political ideologies in general. There was always an asymmetry between Communists and anti-Communists; they were not simply opposite views of the same question. But ideologues act as if, because they believe x, their opponents believe the opposite of x. So, for instance, leftists scold their opponents that "the market is not a solution to every problem," as if their opponents believed it were.

Jean-François Revel, 1992

"Who has ever maintained such an absurdity?" Revel asks. "But since socialism was conceived in the delusion of being able to resolve every problem, its partisans project the same ambition onto their opponents." And this is what makes it particularly dangerous when "ideals" and "convictions" become a legitimate criterion for judging political theories. Once they do, ideologues can impute all resistance to their behavior as resistance to their ideals.

"I always feel a little uneasy," Revel writes, "when I hear someone eulogize a political figure with the vague phrase, 'He (or she) is a person of conviction.' What conviction, exactly?" An opponent of Stalin can be recast as an opponent of "a fair shake for the working man," and if Communism itself fails to give the working man a fair shake—well, then, it is by definition not Communism. Thus, when the Communist regime of Pol Pot committed genocide in Cambodia, the historian and biographer Jean Lacouture opined that it wasn't Communism that was responsible, but "tropical fascism" or "rice-paddy social nationalism."

In the 1990s, when historians began to explore the links between the two midcentury totalitarian ideologies, anti-anti-Communists would make the implausible claim that to do so would hearten the right. Revel engages this argument with gusto. The one indisputably good thing Communism did, he admits, was to fight Nazism. But that tells us nothing.

> The argument that Communism was essentially democratic because it warred against fascists is no more acceptable than its obverse: that Nazism was democratic because it joined the fight against Stalinism.

Moreover, it is built on a misrepresentation. When the European socialist left made its big lurch towards Marxism it did so in the 1960s and '70s, "in the absence of any serious fascist threat in Europe and when Francoist and Salazarist remnants were fading."

If carping at the politics of the 1990s were all Revel had to offer, *Last Exit to Utopia* would be interesting only as a historical document. But Revel was a widely read and immensely witty man, with a glorious prose style, and he is capable of discussing trivial matters in ways that illuminate general principles. In this, *Last Exit* bears a resemblance to Albert O. Hirschman's great short study, *The Rhetoric of Reaction* (1991). In each case, the thinking transcends the narrow ideological aims of its author—social democratic in Hirschman's case, anti-Communist in Revel's—and winds up a study of how human beings argue, no matter what they happen to be arguing about. ♦

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B&A

Puppy Love

The mysterious connection between 'homo sapiens' and 'canis familiaris.' **BY DAVID AIKMAN**

In the dining room of the elegant, five-star Windsor Court Hotel in New Orleans, a striking painting by the English Victorian artist Richard Ansdell (1815-1885) adorns one wall. It shows a huge, and rather fierce-looking dog, perhaps a mastiff, sitting calmly but alertly in front of a little girl who has fallen asleep, quite innocently, in a wicker basket behind him. The painting is called "Keeping Watch."

There are, I suppose, a few misguided cultures in the world that would not understand the picture at all, cultures where dogs are primarily items for gourmet degustation at the dinner table. But the remarkable thing is that, for most of the human race, the painting requires no explanation at all. It simply depicts what is: the fascinating, universally discussed, but incompletely understood relationship of affection and trust that connects the human race to *canis familiaris*, the domesticated dog.

There is still an ongoing scientific dispute about exactly when dogs became fully domesticated. Scientists generally agree that it almost certainly was not later than 7,000 B.C., but it might have been as early as 30,000 B.C. But for as long as humans have been interred in graves with their favorite belongings, or have been able to write about their lives, dogs and humans have been inextricably connected.

In America there are an estimated 55 million dogs that live with families as pets—or "animal companions," to use the snarling politically correct coinage. Yet it is exactly the huge number of them that complicates our efforts to understand them through and through. We are so familiar with dogs, we so readily attribute to them human traits—it is called anthropomorphizing—that we often forget that they are actually animals. At the same time, in our rush to compensate for the sentimentality of anthropomorphizing, we sometimes go to the other extreme of thinking that dogs are *just* animals. They are not; they are animals whose habits and behavior cannot be extricated from the human society in which dogs have learned to live.

The Wolf in the Parlor
The Eternal Connection Between Humans and Dogs
by Jon Franklin
Holt, 304 pp., $25

Inside of a Dog
What Dogs See, Smell, and Know
by Alexandra Horowitz
Scribner, 368 pp., $27

'Sara with her Dog in an Armchair' by Mary Cassatt (1901)

There is a basic scientific consensus that dogs evolved from wolves. Over a period of time, it is speculated, dogs came to hang around human communities, learned to get fed by being of service to humans—or perhaps just by looking cute—and, through millennia of selective breeding, began to lose their most wolf-like qualities. Their snouts became shorter, their brains became bigger—as ours became smaller—and they lost their interest in hunting in packs. At the same time, they seemed to develop an understanding of humans, a familiarity with human behavior, and an intuitive sensitivity to human emotions that endeared them in a special way to their human companions.

Despite all these obvious points, the scientific literature on dogs is remarkably scant. In *The Wolf in the Parlor*, Jon Franklin reports the tragicomic story of one of the foremost authorities on the domesticated dog abandoning his field because he could not secure grants for serious research. The deciders of grants, it must be assumed, are as fond of dogs as the population as a whole; it's just that they are not very interested in helping *people* do research on them. The benighted professor has now turned his attention to goats, which apparently are higher up the academic-grant food chain.

Franklin, a Pulitzer Prize-winning science reporter, writes perhaps the more readable of these two books. On the other hand, Alexandra Horowitz's *Inside of a Dog* is more informative. It gives short shrift not only to anthropomorphism but to other myths, such as the assertion that dogs are color-blind (they are not). One of Horowitz's most fascinating sections explains what, exactly, dogs are doing when they sniff the urination markings of other dogs. Generally, it turns out, dogs are sniffing up the details of the sexual history of other dogs who have left their mark. She breezily dismisses the notion that dogs look to us as part of their pack, or are always on the lookout for the alpha male.

Both authors have had dogs of their own, and both books are full of doggy tales, most of them sentimentally endearing. Franklin has, by far, the most dramatic story: He and his wife were saved from death because their dog smelled (or otherwise sensed) that

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a fire had broken out in a utility room and very rudely awoke them both in time to make an escape.

Of course, dogs that save lives are the staple of stories that make us feel good about ourselves. Dogs rescue drowning children from swimming pools, warn of the danger of a fire, or sometimes alert rural folk to an otherwise unobserved snake in the grass. Well and good. But what about the really difficult to explain times when dogs seem to sense things about other people that we do not? How are dogs able to detect an epileptic seizure minutes before it happens—and, in a few cases, stand at the top of a staircase to prevent an epileptic child falling down it?

Franklin has an arresting anecdote about his dog's embarrassingly unfriendly reaction to meeting a new academic administrator for the first time. The dog retreated to the other end of the room, his tail between his legs; but Franklin had taken an instant liking to the man. Within a few days the administrator started acting towards him like a Gestapo interrogator. How did the dog know that this would happen?

Why, for that matter, do dogs have such a benign effect not just on mental patients but on their owners who are having hard times emotionally? Dogs undoubtedly have a broad range of emotions which appear to include embarrassment, jealousy, and grief. I recall reading a column in the *Times of India* about a dog that was so distraught by the death of its mistress that it died of grief itself within a matter of days. Since scientists admit that animals besides dogs experience a broad spectrum of emotions, it is surely not anthropomorphizing dogs to suggest that their emotional range may have been increased by millennia of interaction with humans. (Cat-lovers, of course, would claim that many of the dog's endearing companionable traits are also demonstrated by cats.) Nobody quite understands how dogs can detect certain kinds of cancer—by smell, obviously—that do not show up on scientific machines.

More difficult to explain is the human/dog closeness that enables dogs, at times, to perceive things about other human beings (is it all smell?) that we humans don't. Dog owners and dog lovers, as Franklin notes, are fiercely loyal in their affection for what used to be called "man's best friend." In the United States there are far more of them than anywhere else in the word: The dog population may be as high as 77.5 million. Dog owners deeply resent any government attempts to part them from their dog companions, and the success of books like *Marley and Me*, and even of memoirs purportedly written by dogs in the homes of famous humans, prove that we cannot get enough of the relationship with our favorite four-legged companion.

I have often claimed, only half-flippantly, that George H.W. Bush won his presidential race over Michael Dukakis at least, in part, because he revealed to the American people that he shared his shower with his wife's dog, Millie—who, I mean the *dog*, went on to write a bestselling book. *That's my kind of guy*, countless American voters apparently thought. *Woof-woof!* Or if you are a German mutt, *wau-wau!* ♦

B&A

The Edwards File

Beneath that slick exterior is a genuine sleazebag.

BY DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

I never want to hear again how scary it was that Sarah Palin almost became vice president.

Now that I've read Andrew Young's exposé, *The Politician*, I can only sigh in relief that Edwards's presidential bid tanked in 2008. Likewise the Democratic ticket after John Kerry drafted him in 2004. Didn't Kerry understand that his shallow running mate eschewed briefing books, was preoccupied with his looks, and overly ambitious yet woefully inexperienced? Sure, Edwards was good-looking and could deliver a peppy speech, but he was also narcissistic, unprepared for the White House, and his worldview was distorted by supporters who worshipped him with cult-like devotion.

The Politician
An Insider's Account of John Edwards's Pursuit of the Presidency and the Scandal That Brought Him Down
by Andrew Young
Thomas Dunne, 320 pp., $24.99

Ah, but you see, Kerry was so desperate to win the general election that he stooped to picking a man whom he had to know was constitutionally unsuited to be a heartbeat away from the presidency.

Debra J. Saunders writes a syndicated column for the San Francisco Chronicle.

I picked up *The Politician* because I wanted the answer to two questions. First, could it be true, as John Heilemann and Mark Halperin assert in *Game Change*, that Edwards's staff considered him "sorta asexual," and that they were shocked to discover that he would get caught cheating on Elizabeth Edwards? Not according to Young, who writes that he had seen Edwards flirt inappropriately, pocket notes from groupies at events, and heard rumors about "extramarital affairs"—which he chose not to believe. Second, how did Edwards get Young, a law school graduate, to claim to be the father of the baby his mistress Rielle Hunter was carrying? *The Politician* rolls out the craven decisions this son of a politically connected preacher made to become indispensable to Edwards.

> At every chance, I volunteered to do more, so when everyone else turned down the job of driving the senator when he came to town—picking him up at the airport, ferrying him

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around the state, bringing him back to the airport—I grabbed it.

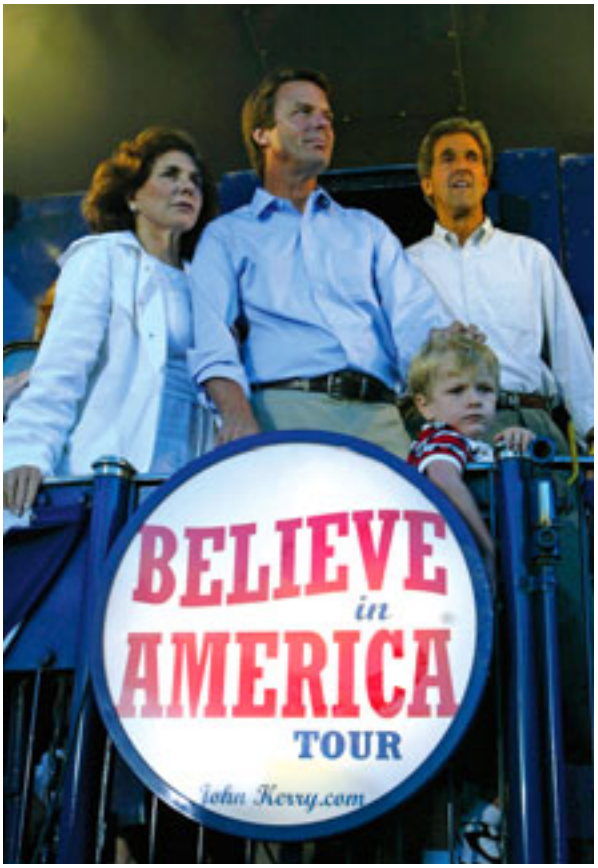
As the "body man" for Edwards, "I didn't talk unless he wanted to talk, and I learned to say, 'Yes, sir' to every request he ever made. 'No' wasn't in my vocabulary." In time, Young became the man Elizabeth Edwards called to oversee housing repairs, to help with the Christmas shopping, register the Edwardses to vote. He even allowed Edwards to use his name to register for extensive dental work and plastic surgery to remove a mole from his upper lip.

As Young began to cross ethical lines, he told himself that the demeaning tasks he was called upon to perform would allow him to be a part of history, as he was convinced that someday John Edwards would be president and Andrew Young would be serving by his side.

Yet by Young's own account, Edwards clearly lacked the *gravitas* one would hope for in a president: He notoriously ignored the briefing books staffers labored to produce, and he liked to "watch stupid movies like *Tommy Boy*." Edwards decided to enter politics not simply because of the tragic death of his son Wade, but after watching *The American President* starring Michael Douglas.

Young's Edwards was never happy as a senator. He burned through five chiefs of staff in six years. Having been elected to the Senate in 1998 he felt no responsibility to master the job before lobbying to become Al Gore's running mate in 2000. In courting Kerry, Edwards said he would tell the Yankee senator a story that no one knew—about embracing Wade's body at the medical examiner's office. "Kerry was stunned and put off because Edwards had actually shared the same tale with him more than once."

Mrs. Edwards debuts as a loving wife and mother, as well as shrewd political adviser with a natural's touch for appealing to voters. She once promised to chauffeur a woman who had been Wade's friend to truck-driving class. (Young ended up doing the driving.) After Young supervised Edwards's Senate staffers, who were moving possessions Elizabeth Edwards didn't trust to a moving company, Young writes, "Instead of thanks, I received a grilling about buying beer and pizza for the volunteers who met me to unload." Her behavior devolved after she answered a ringing cell phone left in her husband's luggage, only to hear how much Rielle Hunter missed her husband.



On the campaign trail with the Kerrys, 2004

GETTY IMAGES

By this time, Young later realized, he no longer saw the Edwardses "clearly. In fact, I was willing to imagine they had positive qualities they didn't actually possess and overlook their flaws and mistakes, because I needed them to succeed." He was hooked. Over-mortgaged and seduced by the access to fame he had acquired—flying in private jets and hanging out with Hootie and the Blowfish and the Dave Matthews Band, chit-chatting with Ted Kennedy—by the time Edwards asked Young to say he was Quinn Hunter's father he had invested too much in Edwards to watch him fail.

As one who saw Edwards as a smarmy lightweight, I nonetheless was drawn in by Young's valet's eye view of this man who would be president. Once, Young lent Edwards his car; the senator backed it into another car and left a dent in Young's new Chevrolet Suburban without telling him, or offering to pay for the damage. The dent became "a reminder of John Edwards's sense of entitlement," Andrew Young's vehicular proof that no man is a hero to his valet.

But a man can be a hero to someone else's valet. Of Erskine Bowles, Young writes, "I admired his intelligence and honesty and the fact that he refused to let me help him bring his luggage and golf clubs inside." Rielle Hunter fares less well in Young's judgment, especially in light of her shabby treatment after she moved in with Young, his wife Cheri, and their three children, and the entourage embarked on a surreal months-long odyssey from private jet to luxury hotel to Aspen superhome in order to bolster a charade that no one but Elizabeth Edwards believed. *If* she believed. Young never does explain exactly when he began saving text messages, voicemail, and (we now know) the infamous sex tape, although in their last confrontation, Young told Edwards that he had begun keeping notes "almost every day since I began working for him."

Did Young begin thinking he was drafting a diary for history, or as critics suggest, fodder for a book deal? Can readers trust a man who, in attesting to be the father of Rielle Hunter's baby, is a known liar? Can readers trust a man ready to do anything to help put such an unworthy character into the White House? Well, having

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read other accounts, and trusting in Young's ample documentation—not to mention his publisher's fear of the tort system—I found this account believable, and wrenching. Of course, the Edwardses are hardly credible—what with John Edwards denying any extramarital affair, then admitting the affair but denying paternity, then admitting paternity—but the irony is that Young forfeited his credibility for a ruse that no one in politics took seriously.

"What happened to loyalty?" a CNN talking head recently asked as she repeated the standard refrain about Andrew Young. To read *The Politician* is to understand that, after sacrificing his time, reputation, and his very employability, Andrew Young owes John and Elizabeth Edwards nothing. ♦

B&A

George the First

It's not easy to demean the Man from Mount Vernon.

BY EDWARD ACHORN

Books about Abraham Lincoln cascade off the presses, with no sign of abating, exploring every element of the man you could think of: his mental problems, his law career, his campaigns, his family, his bumptious cabinet, his personal secretaries, each one of his famous speeches, his summer home, his sex life, his brushes with Walt Whitman. While our obsessive interest in this complicated man reflects an admiration for his piercing intellect, his magnificent prose, and sympathy for human frailty in the midst of the Civil War, we seem to love Lincoln most because we find him a recognizable fellow human being, a man who came from nothing, suffered the scorn of his superiors, failed often, worried much, endured an impossible wife, and masked his pain with jokes and rural parables.

The Ascent of George Washington
The Hidden Political Genius of an American Icon
by John E. Ferling
Bloomsbury, 464 pp., $30

The only president of his stature—if not greater—is, by comparison, a publishing dud. Unlike Lincoln, George Washington could never be deemed one of us: He spent his whole life being bigger and better than his fellow man, imposing a chilly distance that the most fervent admiration of his countrymen has never been able to warm. The prospects that he might seem human dimmed considerably when Martha Washington destroyed his letters to her after his death.

He comes down to us as a stuffy, upright man with bad teeth, in sore need of being whipped up into something more exciting. His earliest biographer, a former aide named David Humphreys, seemed so dumbstruck by the great man that he produced an absurdly brief volume that featured, bizarrely, only two paragraphs on Washington's role in the revolution. His most famous biographer, Parson Weems, had to inject his account with colorful inventions, such as Washington's prayer at Valley Forge and his boyhood confrontation with a cherry tree.

Yet Washington is the essential American, the man above all others to whom we owe our country. And he is someone we ought to know. For decades, writers have striven to inject some blood into the marble. H. L. Mencken, for one, thought the hagiographers, from the general's generation on down, had it all wrong:

> He was the Rockefeller of his time, the richest man in the United States, a promoter of stock companies, a land-grabber, an exploiter of mines and timber. He was a bitter opponent of foreign alliances, and denounced their evils in harsh, specific terms. He had a liking for all forthright and pugnacious men, and a contempt for lawyers, schoolmasters and all other such obscurantists. He was not pious. He drank whisky whenever he felt chilly, and kept a jug of it handy. He knew far more profanity than Scripture, and used and enjoyed it more. He had no belief in the infallible wisdom of the common people, but regarded them as inflammatory dolts, and tried to save the republic from them.

Modern biographers, in perhaps less gaudy language, have similarly striven to make him a recognizable human being, as Joseph J. Ellis memorably did in *His Excellency* (2004), capturing Washington's passion and ambition without ignoring his incomparable courage and endurance.

Now, John Ferling tries to go one step further by presenting Washington, not without expressing admiration, as a calculating, duplicitous, at times devious and self-serving political genius—"a master of persuasion, manipulation, and deniability," as the dust jacket puts it, rather than the strikingly honorable man we know.

"Most of Washington's contemporaries thought him uniquely above politics, 'disinterested,' as they put it, meaning that he made decisions judiciously, letting the chips fall where they may without regard to sectional, provincial, or personal interest," Ferling writes. In truth, "George Washington was so good at politics that he alone of all of America's public officials in the past two centuries succeeded in convincing others that he was not a politician."

Ferling's method in revealing Washington's conniving nature is to revisit the major events of his life and apply a highly skeptical interpretation to many of them, often blasting away at his repu-

Edward Achorn, deputy editorial page editor of the Providence Journal*, is the author of the forthcoming* Fifty-nine in '84: Old Hoss Radbourn, Barehanded Baseball, and the Greatest Season a Pitcher Ever Had *(Smithsonian/HarperCollins).*

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tation with an arsenal of loaded words. Washington enlisted in the 1750s to fight the French because he was "mad for glory." The Frenchmen encountered by forces commanded by Washington were "murdered," as well as "scalped [by Indians] and evidently left unburied by Washington." Having "ordered a hostile act against a peaceful party," Washington worried what would become of his career and faced "a monumental job of rehabilitation." His reports about a disastrous campaign were "penned in a triumphant tone," and he "never, then or later, admitted any errors on his part. . . . Not for the last time in his career, Washington pinned the blame on someone else."

When Washington is not describing himself in a triumphant tone, he is cleverly enlisting surrogates to advance his fame. In a later ambush, Washington fails to "make public any of his accounts" of his brave actions, though "some of his correspondents—as he must have known would be the case—saw to their publication." Any admirable behavior is little more than a calculated pose: "As always, Washington sought to hide what he thought were his own shortcomings—his lack of education, a volcanic temper, and vaulting ambition—and to exhibit what others would see as virtues, including dedication, industry, and fairness." When he makes a statement, he is "claiming" something. When his fellow officers praise his courage, they have "an incentive for flattering him." And on and on it goes.

This is a George Washington who tries to cheat his fellow soldiers out of valuable land awarded as a bounty for their services, and a self-absorbed farmer-politician who is bent on enjoying his "inordinate consumption" while the country is on the brink of revolution. "While major cities were afire with street protests against the [Stamp Act], and Patrick Henry fanned the flames in the House of Burgesses," Ferling writes, "Washington's diary entries read: 'Sowed turneps . . . Began to seperate the Male from the Female hemp . . . Seperated my Ewes and Rams . . . Finish Sowing Wheat . . . Began to Pull the Seed Hemp.'" When the planter-aristocrat suddenly assumes a "fever pitch" in his denunciations of British tyranny, Ferling finds it hard to accept that "Washington truly believed British policy was unconstitutional and posed a grave threat to American liberties." Ferling contends that it must have had something to do with Washington's lifelong resentment of "America's subservient status in the eyes of Britain's ruling class."

'The Battle of Princeton' by John Trumbull

Washington is a disaster as a military strategist, quick to fault others and hide his blunders. When he retires after the Revolutionary War, "Not every officer still in the army bothered to attend, nor did any who were out of the army but living nearby"—not even Alexander Hamilton. When Washington is urged to become president, his long delay in accepting is "largely theater by the consummate actor," though "not entirely self-serving" since he shrewdly knows Americans are reluctant to admire power-hungry politicians and he needs their support to shore up the young country.

I suppose there is value to thrusting Washington into a new light, to reveal aspects seldom considered before. I found it an interesting, at times provocative, exercise, and Ferling knows his facts. Yet the Washington that emerges seems jarringly discordant. As the Founders well knew, men are motivated by self-interest, and even a man as great as George Washington was only human. Were all of the people who were fiercely loyal to this man effectively duped by a master actor who concealed a deficient character? Was his extraordinary courage and resolve during the revolution, keeping the dream of independence alive in the face of defeats, deprivation, and threats to his reputation, primarily a bid for fame and power? Was his sense of honor calculated, his love of freedom a ploy, his lifetime of devotion to the American cause a reflection of a lust for power and glory?

These are questions worth asking. But for what it's worth, the Washington we know—bad teeth, bad temper, thin skin, chilly reserve and all—seems a vastly greater man than the "brilliant" politician who emerges in these pages. ♦

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B&A

Ellroy's Vision

Conspiracy theories told the hard-boiled way.

BY JOEL SCHWARTZ

Because he writes books laced with profanity and graphic descriptions of violence, James Ellroy isn't a writer to everyone's taste. He is nonetheless the most intellectually ambitious writer of crime fiction in our time.

With the publication of *Blood's a Rover*, Ellroy has completed what he calls the *Underworld USA* trilogy: three massive, complex novels that paint a haunting and horrifying picture of recent American history (1958-72). The books focus on the malign role played in that history by organized crime, rogue elements of the CIA, and (above all) J. Edgar Hoover, who is the central character of the trilogy. To my mind the books' politics are repellent, but they are still very much worth reading—in particular the first volume, *American Tabloid*.

So what are the books'—and their author's—politics? That question is disputed. In 2005 Ellroy was the subject of an admiring interview in which he stated bluntly "I'm not a liberal" and noted approvingly that "most cops are conservatives." In other interviews he has gone further, describing himself as "a Tory by nature" who is "conservative by temperament." Furthermore, Ellroy is clearly not an admirer of either John Kennedy or Bill Clinton: In the brief prelude to *American Tabloid*, speaking in his own name for the first and last time in the trilogy, he memorably declares that JFK—whom he depicts as a charming but shallow sexual athlete—was "Bill Clinton minus pervasive media scrutiny and a few rolls of flab."

But is Ellroy really a conservative? If we follow D.H. Lawrence's advice and trust the "tale" rather than the artist, a different picture emerges. Ellroy's books suggest that he is on the left and, in fact, the rather hard left. As it happens, the artist himself has lent support to this conclusion, in a statement in yet another interview: "America itself as an entity was founded on a bedrock of racism, slavery, land-grabs, and the slaughter of the indigenous people."

Blood's a Rover
by James Ellroy
Knopf, 656 pp., $28.95

James Ellroy, 2009

That judgment furnishes an interpretive key that helps make sense of the politics of the trilogy. All three novels explore vicious American racism—Mafia chieftains and J. Edgar Hoover being among the most vicious racists. All three novels indicate that American involvement in undeveloped countries (Cuba in the first book, Vietnam in the second, and Haiti and the Dominican Republic in the third) consists largely of support for Third World dictators who brutalize and oppress their impoverished subjects. Ellroy does not romanticize communism, but all of the books' anti-communists are either far-right fanatics or greedy businessmen. Admirable, principled opponents of Communism on moral grounds are nowhere to be found.

Finally, the books embrace conspiracy theorizing in a big way. *American Tabloid* culminates in the assassination of JFK—murdered at the behest of organized crime, which was angered by Castro's expropriation of its Cuban casinos (and then by Kennedy's unwillingness to continue to try to oust Castro after the failure of the Bay of Pigs invasion), and by Robert Kennedy's crusade against organized crime. (The assassination is given tacit permission by J. Edgar Hoover, who refers to it obliquely as a measure "of great boldness." Lee Harvey Oswald was a fall guy; the real assassin, we learn in the next volume, was a rightwing French extremist.)

Mutatis mutandis, the next volume, *The Cold Six Thousand*, tells a similar story. This book culminates with the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy. Both of these assassinations again receive tacit permission from Hoover: King's assassination is an offshoot of an FBI campaign (orchestrated by Hoover) to discredit the civil rights leader; Mafia leaders are responsible for the RFK—as for the JFK—hit, because they know of (and fear) his intention to fight organized crime if he is elected president in 1968. (James Earl Ray and Sirhan Sirhan are, like Oswald, patsies, made use of by the actual assassins to obscure their own guilt.)

In short, the trilogy displays all of the nuanced political sophistication that we've come to expect from the musings of Gore Vidal. James Piereson's *Camelot and the Cultural Revolution* might have been written with Ellroy in mind: The books manifest precisely the conspiratorial thinking and loathing for America whose post-1963 origins were so brilliantly explored by Piereson.

And yet—in spite of all that, *American Tabloid* is an excellent crime novel, and the two subsequent books are well worth reading. They convincingly portray an alternative-universe America, thankfully different from the real one but

MARK COGGINS

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still believable in some respects. Ellroy draws on enough real historical facts—e.g., Robert Kennedy's fixation on convicting Jimmy Hoffa, Joseph Kennedy's early years as a bootlegger—to make for a credible portrait of an America dominated in important ways by organized crime. In short, Ellroy facilitates the willing suspension of his readers' disbelief.

Furthermore, Ellroy excels at constructing extremely complex plots that fit together. In this context it's worth noting that, before he writes a novel, Ellroy produces a detailed plot outline. The outline for *The Cold Six Thousand* reportedly came to 350 pages—more than half the length of the finished book. Ellroy's characters are also believable: The plot of *American Tabloid* is advanced through a kaleidoscopic shifting of alliances among the three major characters, in which a different one of the three is, from time to time, at odds with the other two. These shifts are always believable, as are the characters themselves: a charming, amoral, greedy, and ambitious FBI agent who worships the Kennedys and is undone when they reject him; a guilt-ridden, moralistic FBI agent, fiercely opposed to organized crime, who—after Robert Kennedy, influenced by J. Edgar Hoover, refuses to hire him to work in the Justice Department—does an about-face and goes to work for the mob; and a brutally immoral rogue ex-cop, who develops something like a conscience after he falls in love.

Finally, in his own way, Ellroy is a master stylist. He employs several different styles, each to good effect. The books are narrated in an extremely stripped-down manner that makes Ernest Hemingway sound like late Henry James: Adjectives—let alone subordinate clauses—need not apply. The books' extreme graphic violence is conveyed in this style.

Here's an example from *Blood's a Rover*, describing the punishment meted out by the Dominican secret police to youthful protestors who oppose the government's razing of houses in order to facilitate the mob's building of casino-hotels:

> Three kids ran out of the brush. They wore masks and Uncle Ho shirts and carried flame-topped bottles. Get it? *Molotov cocktails*. . . .
>
> Tiger Kart [the car transporting one of the book's main characters, who is working with the mob to build the casino-hotels] cut back and rolled northbound. They saw the Molotov kids, dead in a ditch. They were head-shot point-blank. Their Uncle Ho shirts were slashed. Their hands and feet were severed. A La Banda guy [a secret policeman] stepped out of the brush and waved.

A second style, found in *American Tabloid* but not the subsequent volumes, mimics the alliterative prose that used to be found in scandal magazines—full of dirt about both showbiz personalities and politicians. Consider this supposed 1958 assessment of JFK:

Much of it is frightening, but much of it is also very funny. And notwithstanding the foulness of the books' politics, I marvel at Ellroy's creation in the trilogy of his alternative-universe America.

> U.S. Senate cloakroom wags say he's far from being the most dedicatedly demonic Democrat dallier. No, Senator L.B. (Lover Boy?) Johnson probably tops political polls in that department, with Florida's George F. 'Pass the Smackeroos' Smathers coming in second. No, Senator John F. Kennedy is rather a tenuously tumescent tomcat, with a tantalizingly trenchant taste for those finely-furred and felicitous felines who find him fantastically fetching themselves!

A third style is used for J. Edgar Hoover's dialogue, most of which is taken from what purport to be transcripts of telephone calls. Hoover is depicted as a brilliant strategist and tactician who is also a racist. Both his brilliance and his racism come across nicely in this statement from *The Cold Six Thousand*, in which Hoover comments wryly on his limited mandate to fight the Ku Klux Klan: "God will punish [the Klansmen] for lynchings and castrations, should He lapse on the side of compassion and find them unjustified. I will punish them for Federal Mail Fraud."

A fourth style, providing much-needed comic relief, is reserved for the speech of the mobsters—think of Damon Runyon characters who are foul-mouthed racists, and you'll get the idea. Thus, in *The Cold Six Thousand*, one of the mob bosses complains about RFK: "That c—ksucker used us. He put his faggot brother in the White House at our expense. He f—ed us like the pharaohs f—ed Jesus." A colleague then corrects him: "The Romans, Santo. The pharaohs f—ed Joan of Arc."

A fifth style, introduced in *Blood's a Rover*, consists of confidential diary entries penned by extremely thoughtful and introspective people: two leftist women who, for reasons of their own, act as informants to an FBI agent working (at Hoover's instigation) on a plot to discredit black militants; and a black Los Angeles cop, who goes undercover as part of this plot and acts as an *agent provocateur*, trying to get the militants to sell heroin. Here's an excerpt from the cop's diary, describing the aftermath of a beating administered to him by a few white Los Angeles policemen:

> My unlikely rescuer was Jomo Kenyatta Clarkson, Propaganda Minister for the preposterously named Mau-Mau Liberation Front, along with his friends Shondell and Bobby. Jomo is garrulous and recognizably psychopathic and continues to break the world's land speed record for use of the word "motherf—er" in a single sentence.

As that quotation suggests, *Blood's a Rover* is the most politically balanced of the three *Underworld USA* novels. It is genuinely critical of the self-styled black revolutionaries of the late '60s and early '70s. Thus, one of the main characters,

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an FBI agent, persuades his lover, one of the leftist women, to inform on black militants. She agrees to do so because she accepts his claim that they're

> out to sell dope and cash in on social protest. Because they're s— birds who abuse women. Because they'll get a lot of very impressionable young black men fired up to do crazy s— that will derail their f—ing lives forever, and the overall social benefit that they'll create from being in business will be down around zero.

Furthermore, the black undercover cop voices contempt for the radical-chic white liberals who support black militant groups that

> front programs to feed wholesome breakfasts to impoverished ghetto children. White liberals find this fetching and donate money that the MMLF [Mau-Mau Liberation Front] and BTA [Black Tribe Alliance] spends [sic] on hate-lit supplies, guns and dope. The breakfasts are homey affairs, often written up and photographed by a doting media. The breakfast food is extorted from local merchants. . . . Sunday breakfasts are often followed by "media mixers," featuring Bloody Marys, soul food, and reefer. These are hilarious, mixed-message, mixed-race moments. Yeah, we wants to kill all de pigs and destroy de white power structure, but we thinks *you* cool.

That said, *Blood's a Rover* remains a leftwing book. It portrays a left that's pathetic—compared with a right that's vicious and dangerous. It also bears noting that the book's plot largely consists of the success of the two leftwing women in moving the three main male characters—the FBI agent, a former Las Vegas cop who now works for the mob, and a young private eye who's involved in the mob effort to build the Dominican casino-hotels—sharply to the left.

Unlike the first two books in the trilogy, *Blood's a Rover* suffers from its lack of an obvious climax—recall that the two earlier books conclude with the 1963 assassination of JFK and the 1968 assassinations of MLK and RFK. One might have expected this final book to culminate with Watergate, but Ellroy chose not to pursue that obvious path, declaring, "I don't give a s— about [Watergate]. Nobody got killed and it's been done to death." So *Blood's a Rover* culminates instead somewhat anticlimactically with the 1972 death—more or less natural, but read the book to find out more—of J. Edgar Hoover.

Blood's a Rover is hardly Ellroy at his best, but it is still very much worth reading. Its plot is complex but well thought out, and the characters are nicely developed. Much of it is frightening, but much of it is also very funny. And notwithstanding the foulness of the books' politics, I marvel at Ellroy's creation in the trilogy of his alternative-universe America. To explain this seeming contradiction, I refer to W.H. Auden's "In Memory of W.B. Yeats," in which Auden came to grips with his admiration for writers whose (conservative) views he disliked. "Time," he declared,

> *Worships language and forgives*
> *Everyone by whom it lives;*
> *Pardons cowardice, conceit,*
> *Lays its honours at their feet.*
>
> *Time that with this strange excuse*
> *Pardoned Kipling and his views,*
> *And will pardon Paul Claudel,*
> *Pardons [Yeats] for writing well.*

In a strange and idiosyncratic way, James Ellroy also writes well. And his books are so ambitious and so imaginative that I can overlook their seriously wrongheaded politics. ♦

B&A

Victoria in Love

A queen's life before she became the Widow of Windsor.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

When a moviegoer contemplates buying a ticket to a costume drama—the term assigned to the genre in which historical personages cavort for our pleasure in clothing worn today only on Halloween—he must contend with the fear that he will end up with the cinematic equivalent of a creaky second-rate davenport rotting away in a thrift shop. Since the dawn of Hollywood, costume dramas have all too often been persnickety, tiresomely correct, proper to the point of extreme dullness, and, like that davenport, reeking of mildew.

The Young Victoria
Directed by Jean-Marc Vallée

But mustiness is only one of the concerns any serious moviegoer must have about attending a costume drama. The problem is that when costume dramas try to avoid the mold, and are therefore not as careful and respectful of the historical period they evoke, they will commit other sins—particularly those sins that arise when tales of the past are repurposed to make cutesy points about the present, or to wink at today's audiences for possessing a more advanced sensibility than the characters on screen.

Such a thing happens even in the best of movies—for example, in the otherwise glorious *Shakespeare in Love*, which comes to a groaning halt when Queen Elizabeth tells the cross-dressing Gwyneth Paltrow in her guise as a male actor, "I know something of a woman in a man's profession. Yes, by God, I do know about that."

These moments of deliberate ideological anachronism are bad enough; the directorial hyperactivity that has recently characterized movies set in a recognizable historical past may be worse. The

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Emily Blunt as Queen Victoria

desperate fear that the proceedings are going to seem dull causes many a filmmaker to descend into hysterical excess, with cameras swinging about, characters preening and screaming and crying, and crescendos appearing in every bar of the musical score. Ridley Scott's *Gladiator* and *Kingdom of Heaven* turned millennia-old battles and tussles into versions of the Army's be-all-that-you-can-be commercials. Shekhar Kapur's two movies with Cate Blanchett about (again) Elizabeth I seem to confuse the sartorial tastes of 16th-century London with those of 20th-century Bombay.

So why are these costume dramas still getting made? Because sending us into the past is one of the things movies can do better than any other medium; and because the stories they tell are both familiar in outline and unfamiliar in detail, and have stayed alive for centuries for a reason. And because, if they can avoid the traps of anachronism, they can offer adults, in particular, a pretty good time.

Such is the case with the latest costume drama, *The Young Victoria*, which begins the year before England's longest-reigning monarch took the throne in 1837 and concludes four years later with the birth of her son, the future Edward VII. The movie is never less than diverting, owing to two very graceful performances: Emily Blunt's as Victoria and Rupert Friend's as her first cousin and eventual husband Albert, and a dazzling one by Paul Bettany as the great Whig politician Lord Melbourne (despite the fact that Bettany is 15 years too young for the part and Blunt and Friend far too good-looking for theirs). Though it takes one pretty dramatic liberty with the historical record—having to do with an assassination attempt—*The Young Victoria* is meticulous about the complexities of her ascent to the throne and the family dramas that accompanied it.

Perhaps too meticulous. The movie, written by the estimable Julian Fellowes, refuses to engage in crass speculation, so it never offers an explanation for the war of wills between Victoria's widowed mother, the Duchess of Kent (Miranda Richardson), and her brother-in-law, King William IV (Jim Broadbent). He complains that she has kept Victoria from him, which is a little difficult to understand, since the teenaged Victoria loves him and he *is* the king, after all.

Victoria's teenage years are characterized by her harsh treatment at the hands of her mother's secretary, Sir John Conroy; but just why Conroy is permitted to treat the future queen of England so badly is never really fleshed out, even though it was generally believed during their lifetimes that the Duchess and Conroy were lovers. Oddly enough for a movie released in 2009, *The Young Victoria* draws a Victorian veil over such idle gossip.

The Young Victoria proves surprisingly moving for the same reason that the story of Victoria and Albert has remained a matter of fascination for nearly two centuries—that in the unlikeliest of circumstances, amid emotional conspiracies and political rivalries in which the feelings of the people involved were of almost no moment, two awkward young royals found each other, achieved mutual respect and eventual love, and managed, with a maturity that belied their years, to negotiate private terms for a successful marriage.

And the costumes? To die for. ♦

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"The European Union has shown its righteous wrath by stripping Greece of its vote at a crucial meeting next month, the worst humiliation ever suffered by an EU member state." —**The Daily Telegraph**, *February 16, 2010*

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EU Places Greece Under 'Double Secret' Probation

Athens lashes out, still hosts toga party

By Gerrit Wiesmann in Berlin and Kerin Hope in Athens

Tensions in Europe spilled over yesterday when the German government announced that for the last three months Greece has been under "double secret" probation for what it calls gross fiscal irresponsibility and that the latest news of a currency swap involving the Greek government and Goldman Sachs was the last straw. As a visibly irate Chancellor Angela Merkel told reporters, "Frankly my country has had enough with the Greek antics—a ballooning budget deficit, a lack of serious economic reform, mounting debt, a panty-raid at the Bundesbank, delivering cadavers to the alumni dinner. The list is endless."

Meanwhile the finance ministers in Brussels were also up in arms. "Has the Greek government even examined its budget deficit yet?" asked Eurogroup chairman Jean-Claude Juncker. "It's more than a little below par. It stinks! It's the worst in the EU. It's the worst in EU history!"

News of the probation came shortly after Greece made its own case for a bailout at the last EU summit. "You can't hold a whole country responsible for the behavior of a few, sick, twisted individuals," pleaded Greek prime minister George Papandreou. "For if you do, then shouldn't we blame the whole eurozone system? And if the whole eurozone system is guilty, then isn't this an indictment of our EU institutions in general?" Papandreou concluded by saying that "you can do whatever you want to us, but we're not going to sit here and listen to you badmouth the European Union!" before he and his entire delegation stormed out while humming the Greek national anthem.

SABRINA MATUS

Members of the Papandreou government, including this unnamed finance official, enjoyed a toga party despite the threat of sanctions by the EU.

The diplomatic row began last month during an EU reception in Athens. Greek finance minister George Papaconstantinou, having had more than his share of ouzo, tried to rally his fellow cabinet members with a pep talk, insisting that "Nothing is over until we decide it is! Was it over when the Romans defeated us at Thermopylae?" (No one attempted to correct him since he seemed to be on a roll.) But the German ambassador to Greece was not pleased and later told Constantinou that "fat, drunk, and

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